#BLACKLIVESMATTER NOW TRENDING:

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM ON PURCHASE INTENTION

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Master of Professional Communication

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Dedication

To my mom, Heidi Fowers, who taught me the importance of exploration and gave me the freedom to do so; my sisters, Zadey and Zenia, whose passions inspire my own; and to my spouse, Alex Delbar, for being a constant source of laughter, comfort, love, and ice cream as I frantically attempted to balance full-time work, full-time school, and being a normal human being.

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Abstract

#BlackLivesMatter now trending: The impact of social media activism on purchase intention

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In June 2020, social media platforms were filled with users showing support of the Black Lives Matter movement. Employing the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the impact of conspicuous virtue signaling through social media activism on purchasing attention for an inconspicuous product was analyzed. Participants viewed an advertisement that contained either a Black or non-Black model and Black Lives Matter messaging or neutral messaging. Purchase intention, model affiliation, cultural exposure, activism, and social media activism were measured. Results revealed that when individuals are activists on social media only, they are more likely to have purchase intentions when the advertisement is processed centrally.

Introduction

Founded in 2013, Black Lives Matter is a global organization that was created in response to the acquittal of the murderer of Trayvon Martin, an innocent, 17-year-old, Black American (Black Lives Matter, n.d.). The movement's mission is "to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes by combating and counteracting acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy" (Black Lives Matter, n.d., para. 1). Black Lives Matter seeks to be expansive, inviting all (regardless of race, sexuality, religion) to be a part of creating a safe place free of oppression for Black people worldwide (Black Lives Matter, n.d.).

In May 2020, a surge of attention focused on Black Lives Matter, sparking a desire for many to overcome their own implicit prejudice against Black individuals. Seven out of ten Americans claimed that they had conversions focused on race or racial equality in June 2020 (Parker, Horowitz, & Anderson, 2020). On June 2, 2020, now known as 'Blackout Tuesday', Instagram had over 22 million black squares posted by users to show their support of Black Lives Matter (Abril, 2020) and many promised to overcome their own personal bias toward Black individuals (Noman, 2020).

The increase of social media activism surrounding Black Lives Matter provides brands with an opportunity to showcase their support by including Black Lives Matter messaging within their advertisements. This research explored how social media activism for Black individuals affects Purchase intention (PI) when individuals are exposed to advertisements that contain Black models with Black Lives Matter messaging. Employing the Elaboration Likelihood Model, a sample of about 357 people were exposed to advertisements that contained a non-Black or Black model and Black Lives Matter or neutral messaging. Then, participants were surveyed

for PI. The research sought to uncover if social media activism is primarily conspicuous virtue signaling or if individuals are willing to support the Black Lives Matter movement and/or Black individuals through PI when the support is inconspicuous.

Literature Review

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Developed by Cacioppo and Petty (1984), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) describes the processes in which individuals evaluate the vast amounts of information presented to them because people are "neither invariantly cognitive nor universally mindless" when choosing how to understand and react to persuasive messages (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984, p. 673). ELM claims that there are two processing routes that lead to persuasion: the central route and peripheral route (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). The goal of ELM is to understand how attitudes change. The central route is consciousness leading to attitude change; whereas, the peripheral route tends to focus on emotions leading to attitude change (Blythe, 2009).

The central route is characterized by "issue-relevant thinking" and occurs when an individual takes time to elaborate their thoughts on the message (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984, p. 673). When an individual uses this route, they are likely to think: about the message, about familiar associations that are relevant such as images or memories, deeply upon the messages and scrutinize arguments according to their associations, and about the credibility of the argument based on their associations. The process will ultimately allow the individual to derive their evaluation or attitude toward the persuasive message (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984; Freedman & Spyridaskis, 2004; Tukachinsky, 2012).

Peripheral route processing occurs when an individual does not elaborate upon a message (Petty & Caicoppo, 1984). Individuals use this route to avoid effortful thinking when they view

the message as personally irrelevant or inconsequential, are distracted, or lack background knowledge; thus, saving their cognitive resources. When individuals use the peripheral route, they are more likely to create a "reasonable" attitude based on their superficial analysis of the message, which will often come from peripheral cues (e.g., speaker credibility). Ultimately, their decision to accept or reject the message is likely to be rooted in positive or negative cues or strength of the argument (Petty & Caicoppo, 1984).

The ELM predicts that when individuals are given information that they personally perceive to be highly relevant, they will decode the message through the central processing route. The individual will value the quality of the message rather than other peripheral cues such as source credibility. The quality of the message will then assist the individual in determining whether the message should be accepted (Herold et al., 2016; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). However, when presented with information that is not personally relevant, the ELM predicts an individual is more likely to process the message based off of peripheral cues rather than the overall quality of the message (Herold et al., 2016; Petty & Cacioppo 1979; Holt, 2018).

Elaboration Likelihood and Black Lives Matter. Past research has highlighted how Black Americans tend to favor the Black Lives Matter movement more so than their non-Black counterparts due to the relevance it holds in their lives. Black Americans are disproportionately murdered from the use of lethal force by law enforcement, with a fatality rate that is 2.8 times higher among Black Americans than White; despite being more likely to be unarmed than White Americans (DeGue et al., 2016) and despite making up a smaller portion of the United States population (76% White, 13.4% Black) (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Due to the applicability of the Black Lives Matter movement, 86% of Black Americans claim to support the Black Lives Matter movement, whereas 45% White, 66% Hispanic, and 69% Asian Americans

claim to support the movement (Thomas & Horowitz, 2020). This acceptance is likely due to the overall mission of the Black Lives Matter movement and how it seeks to resolve and end police brutality against Black Americans, which is likely motivating Black Americans to process the information through the central processing route and be persuaded by the message (Holt, 2018).

In contrast, non-Black Americans are less likely to process Black Lives Matter messaging through the central processing route because the messages may not directly pertain to them. Instead, they may use peripheral cues to understand and form their opinions around the movement. Holt (2018) found that non-Black Americans were more likely to form their opinions regarding Black Lives Matter based on perceived news source credibility, rather than the movement itself. Thus, non-Black Americans are more likely to use the peripheral processing route to understand and form their opinion on Black Lives Matter (Holt, 2018). However, due to the increase of awareness and desire to support the Black community (Abril, 2020; Noman, 2020; Parker et al., 2020), non-Black individuals could be viewing the Black Lives Matter movement as more relevant to their lives, which could motivate them to process the Black Lives Matter movement more centrally than they have in the past.

The sources in which an individual gathers their information surrounding Black Lives Matter also impacts their acceptance of the Black Lives Matter movement. In an examination of Black Lives Matter media coverage, researchers found that the majority of news media highlighted Black Lives Matter protests, rather than publishing the group's written messages or goals (Leopold & Bell, 2017). Although the majority are peaceful, Black Lives Matter protests have become violent and there have been instances of destruction (Chenoweth & Pressman, 2020). Regardless, the news sites have published instances of violent protesting rather than peaceful protesting, likely due to the "newsworthiness" of the violent protests (Leopold & Bell,

2017). Because of this, Black Lives Matter is covered using the protest paradigm, which is a pattern of media coverage that expresses disapproval, which can cause the audience to view the movement negatively (Leopold & Bell, 2017; Lee, 2014).

Furthermore, viewers who are exposed to messages that contain counter arguments for the news protest coverage (e.g., peaceful protests, positive community impacts, etc.), are more likely to centrally process the negative messaging from the news and provide rebuttals for its claims; thus, reducing the impact of the protest paradigm persuasive messaging. However, if viewers are only exposed to messages that are against a given group, they are also likely to centrally process the information as they actively engage and evaluate the message's claims; except this group will be persuaded by the protest paradigm messaging. The persuasion will likely cause them to reject the Black Lives Matter movement (Muller et al., 2014). Thus, where individuals gather information pertaining to Black Lives Matter will impact the way they view the movement.

Purchase Intention

Purchase Intention (PI) refers to the probability an individual would purchase a given product or service (Phelps & Hoy, 1996). If an individual processes the advertisement information using the central processing route and the product has a strong argument, they may be more likely to accept the message and have higher PI. If the advertisement has a weak argument, the individual centrally processing the information may be more likely to reject the message and have lower PI. When an individual processes the advertisement with little argument scrutiny, they will rely on peripheral cues to help them form their opinions, such as speaker credibility, brand credibility, or quality signals (Whittler & Spiria, 2002).

In advertisement messaging, past research has found that the model's race may function as a peripheral cue, especially when the race of the model does not directly relate to the product or the argument (Whittler, 1989; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). However, if the race of the model is different from the race of the individual viewing the advertisement, the individual may be more likely to centrally process the information (Whittler & Spira, 2002). When using peripheral processing, PI increases if an individual who identifies with Black culture views an advertisement that contains a Black model (Whittler & Spira, 2002; Whittler, 1989; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). Thus, if an individual identifies with Black Lives Matter and they see an advertisement with a Black model, it is possible that their PI may increase due to the cues provided.

To show support of the Black Lives Matter movement, some advertisements contain the Black Lives Matter logo of a black fist to spotlight affiliation with the movement. When cultural symbols such as the Black Lives Matter logo are used, what the symbol represents can be passed to the brand through association (Levy, 1989). Those associations then impact how desirable the individual finds the product being advertised. If the individual has positive attitudes and accepts Black Lives Matter, they are more likely to view the brand and product more positively. If the individual has negative attitudes and rejects Black Lives Matter, they are more likely to have lower PI (Dotson & Hyatt, 2000).

During the rise of Black Lives Matter, many brands (such as Nike) have utilized the movement's message in their advertisements to show support while directly or indirectly advertising their products, which can be viewed as virtue signaling. While this can be alienating to their consumers who do not support the movement, brands continue to be comfortable with utilizing advertisements that broadcast their stance on controversial or polarized issues

(Vredenburg et al., 2020). However, when a brand utilizes activist messaging within their messages, their motives can be scrutinized, especially if their business model fails to be in line with the activist messaging. When this occurs, consumers are more likely to reject the conflicting messages and negatively view the brand (Holt 2002; Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010); however, if the individual believes in the virtuous messaging being shared, they may be more likely to be persuaded by the messaging and consume the brands' product or service (Dotson & Hyatt, 2000; Childs & Kim, 2019).

Conspicuous Virtue Signaling on Social Media

Just as brands can advertise the activist groups they claim to support, everyday consumers also broadcast their social movement groups. A common way to do so is through social media, as it is much easier to share and speak up via the internet than it is to protest in person or donate money directly to activist groups (Hon, 2015). When individuals post to social media to inform or engage with their audience regarding social movements, they are participating in conspicuous virtue signaling (CVS). Building upon the theory of conspicuous consumption, which postulates that individuals consume visible goods to enhance their social standing (Veben, 1912), the goal of CVS is to display virtue to enhance the way others view them (Grace & Grifn, 2009).

There are two types of CVS: self-oriented and other-oriented. Self-oriented CVS helps the individual obtain intrinsic benefits, like feeling good about themself. Other-oriented CVS is used to signal to others that the individual behaves in virtuous ways (Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2018; Grace & Grifn, 2006). "For both self- and other-oriented CVS, the behavior is (i) intentionally public, (ii) deliberately designed to signal the individual's virtue, and (iii) a social network such as Facebook is used for CVS so that the virtue display is widely visible to

others" (Wallace et. al, 2018, p. 578). The focus of this research is to explore the effects of self-oriented CVS on PI for products that can be inconspicuous. Ultimately the consequence of virtuous behavior shared on social media is a reputation (Childs & Kim, 2019). In the wake of violence against Black Americans, many people have virtue signaled on social media to prove to their followers that they are not racist nor do they discriminate (Plante, 2020); however, it is important to understand if these virtuous signals can be seen off of social media.

The current body of research has yet to explore the impacts of social media CVS on PI for inconspicuous products. This research fills the gap within the current literature by expounding upon how far social media activist consumers are willing to commit to their social movement when given an opportunity to support the movement with their dollar.

Because of the recent surge of Black Lives Matter support within the United States, particularly on social media, it is important to understand if the virtue signaling continues when individuals are not publicly sharing their movement support. This research will explore the impact of posting Black Lives Matter support on social media on PI for an inconspicuous product. Participants will be exposed to advertisements with either a Black or non-Black model and Black Lives Matter or Neutral messaging to understand the impacts of users' virtue signaling online.

RQ1 - How does regularly posting to social media impact PI when an individual is exposed to an ad for an inconspicuous product with a Black model and Black Lives Matter messaging?

Past research highlights how Black individuals are more likely to process Black Lives Matter messaging using the central processing route due to the relevance of the movement to their own lives (DeGue et al., 2016; Holt, 2018). In addition, non-Black individuals are less likely to

process Black Lives Matter messaging using the central processing route as these individuals may feel that the messages do not directly pertain to them; these individuals may rely on peripheral cues, such as credibility to form their opinions (Holt, 2018). However, due to the recent increase of awareness surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement (Parker et al., 2020), more non-Black individuals may be processing using the central route. Yet, because Black individuals are more likely to experience negative consequences because of their race (DeGue et al., 2016; United States Census Bureau, 2016), Black individuals may be more likely to process the Black Lives Matter using the central processing route and favor advertisements that openly support the movement (Holt, 2018). Because of this, when Black individuals are exposed to an advertisement that has Black Lives Matter messaging, they will be more likely to have higher PI than participants of other races (Whittler & Spira, 2002; Whittler, 1989; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991).

H1: Black individuals will favor ads with Black Lives Matter messaging (regardless of the model's race) more than their counterparts and as a result, they may be more likely to have higher PI.

Because the Black Lives Matter movement does not always directly pertain to non-Black individuals, non-Black individuals are less likely to process Black Lives Matter messaging through the central processing route. As a result, these individuals are more likely to rely on peripheral cues to form their opinion (Holt, 2018). Moreover, when non-Black individuals are exposed to an advertisement that has Black Lives Matter messaging (regardless of the model's race), they may be more likely to have higher PI if they perceive the model to be someone who they find credible.

H2: Non-Black individuals will favor ads with Black Lives Matter messaging (regardless of the model's race) if they perceive the model as someone, they find credible.

Furthermore, people who receive positive information surrounding a movement are more likely to support and have a positive view of the group's mission and goals (Muller, van Zoonen, & Hirzalla, 2014). As a result, they may be more likely to view the Black Lives Matter messaging within the advertisement as a strong argument and have higher PI (Whittler & Spiria, 2002).

H3 - People who affiliate with Black Lives Matter will be more likely to have higher PI when exposed to an advertisement with Black Lives Matter messaging than individuals who do not affiliate with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Methods

Participants

357 participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a crowdsourcing tool and completed the survey on Qualtrics. Participants were randomly assigned an intervention by Qualtrics and 78 respondents were exposed to Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging); 94 respondents were exposed to Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging); 99 respondents were exposed to Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging); and 86 respondents were exposed to Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging) (Figure 1). Participants provided their gender (Table 1), race (Table 2), and year of birth (Table 3). Participants were compensated $0.13 for their responses.

Table 1. Participant Gender

Gender	Percentage of Participants	*n*
Female	49.9%	178
Male	45.7%	163
Other / Undisclosed	4.5%	16

Table 2. Participant Race

Race	Percentage of Participants	*n*
White / European	52.1%	186
Asian	23.0%	82
Hispanic	8.4%	30
Black	7.0%	25
Other / Multiple Races	3.4%	34

Table 3. Participant Year of Birth

Year	Percentage of Participants	*n*
1950-1959	3.4%	12
1960-1969	4.5%	16
1970-1979	14.0%	50
1980-1989	30.3%	108
1990-1999	32.5%	116
2000 ≤	2.0%	7

Instruments

Purchase Intention. The portion of the survey that measured PI was adapted from Whittler's (1989) instrument for measuring PI and model affiliation ($\alpha = .82$). After being shown the advertisement for the food service, participants were asked to indicate their degree of interest in receiving additional information: 1) Yes, I would like to speak with a representative over email; 2) Yes, I would like to speak with a representative over the phone; 3) Yes, I would like to visit the website and learn more; and 4) No, I don't have any interest at all. If the participants

responded yes, their response was coded as having PI. Participants were then asked about their impression of the product on a 3-point scale (from low quality to high quality). If the participants reported to believe the product was high quality, their response was coded as having PI for the product. Participants were asked if they believed that the product could meet their needs on a 3-point scale (from no to yes). If respondents reported yes, their response was coded to have PI. Lastly, participants were asked how likely they were to recommend the product to a close family member on a 3-point scale (from no to yes). If they reported yes, then their responses were coded to have PI. All responses were ranked from one to six, (1= no PI; 6= PI). Results of the PI items were then averaged to find the overall PI of the product (1= no PI; 6= PI) (α= .77) (appendix A).

Furthermore, Whittler's (1989) PI instrument that measured model social desirability was used to explore how the model impacts PI. On a 6-point Likert scale, participants were asked to rank from one (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) on the social desirability of the model. Items included questions such as "Did the advertisement contain a person whom you want to be like?", did "...the advertisement contain your type of person?", and "Do you believe that the advertisement contained a person who belongs to similar groups as you?". The results were averaged to find the respondents overall model social desirability (α = 0.79). The mean of the average of model affiliation and average PI was then used as the dependent variable (α = 0.83) for all hypotheses except H2, which used PI as the dependent variable and model affiliation as an independent variable (Appendix A).

Cultural Exposure. To ensure proper correlation, the participants' cultural exposure using Crowne's (2015) cultural exposure instrument. Past research has found that the breadth of cultural exposure increases an individual's cultural intelligence (Crowne, 2015), which may increase the likelihood of an individual accepting an advertisement regardless of the race of the

model or messaging. Respondents were asked if they had the opportunity to travel abroad, where they travelled to, and what the motives of the travels were. If the respondent reported to have travelled outside of their home country, the response was coded as "yes" to cultural exposure (appendix a).

Social Activism. The social activism instrument was created to measure social movement affiliation and sharing methods ($\alpha = .72$). The purpose of the instrument was to measure what social movement group an individual follows, where they share the message, and how frequently they share the message. Respondents were asked questions such as "Which social activist movement do you most strongly align with?", "Where do you share the movement's message?", "How frequently do you share the movement's message?", and an optional item asking "Why do you support this movement?". To eliminate potential bias, respondents were given the option to choose from multiple social activist movements as well as "other", which allowed them to write in their own response. For the purposes of this study, the respondents who reported to support Black Lives Matter were coded as a 1 on a binary system. All other activist movements were coded as a 0. For the purposes of this study, the sharing medium was coded on a binary system (social media = 1; other mediums = 0) so as to isolate the effects of conspicuous virtue signaling on social media from other platforms. Message sharing frequency was itemized as follows: 1= daily; 2= weekly; 3= monthly; 4= less than 6 times per year; 5= never.

Message Design

The four advertisements (Figure 1) developed contained images of either a Black or non-Black model. Both images contained males sitting at a table and eating. The images were selected due to the similarity in positioning and facial expression with the main difference being skin color. The similarity of the images decreases variances due to product preferences or gender

while isolating variances due to the models' race. The Black Lives Matter messaging involved the Black Lives Matter logo with the words "Black Owned" written across it. The logo is frequently used by Black Lives Matter activists, which increases the likelihood of it being recognized by respondents (Black Lives Matter, n.d.). A food service was being advertised because food is a frequently used product that is of high importance on the hierarchy of needs (Kenrick et al, 2010); thus, lowering the likelihood of the participants not exhibiting purchase intentions due to lack of pertinence.

Figure 1.

Intervention Advertisements

<table>
<tr>
<td>Message 1
● Black Model
● Black Lives Matter Messaging
 
</td>
<td>Message 2
● Black Model
● Neutral Messaging
 
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message 3
● Non-Black Model
● Black Lives Matter Messaging
 
</td>
<td>Message 4
● Non-Black Model
● Neutral Messaging
 
</td>
</tr>
</table>

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, this study was approved by the IRB and inform consent was provided by all participants. Data collection occurred on Qualtrics between October 30, 2020 and November 5, 2020. Upon completion of the survey, each participant was assigned an original code to enter into the MTurk assignment webpage. If the two codes matched in both Qualtrics and MTurk, the participants response was confirmed, recorded, and they received their incentive. One hundred sixteen responses were rejected due to duplicate IP addresses, lack of focus or effort based on manipulation checks, inadequate time spent on survey, or incorrect codes.

The participants were exposed to one of four advertisements with either a Black or non-Black model selling an inconspicuous product (fictional food delivery service) with either Black Lives Matter messaging or neutral messaging (Figure 1). Following the intervention, participants were asked check questions to ensure they understood the advertisement (e.g., “What was the model eating?”, “How much was the product?”, etc.). Following the checks, the dependent PI variable was measured. As independent variables, Black Lives Matter support and social media activism were measured. To ensure proper correlation, cultural exposure was gathered as a variable.

Data Analysis

The 357 responses were recorded through Qualtrics and analyzed in Microsoft Excel using regression analysis (Table 4). The mean of PI and model affiliation was used as the dependent variable. Cultural exposure, Black Lives Matter affiliation, social media activism, gender, and race were used as independent variables. Data was sorted according to the advertisement the participant was exposed to (Table 4).

Table 4. All Demographics: Validity

Message Intervention	*n*	R^2	Significance F
Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging)	78	0.11	0.03
Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging)	94	0.07	0.37
Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging)	99	0.07	0.36
Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging)	86	0.14	0.00

To test H2, non-Black respondents (332) were isolated from the Black respondent's data, leaving only non-Black responses. Non-Black refers to participants who identify as White/ European, Asian, Hispanic or other races. The mean of PI was used as the dependent variable and model affiliation, cultural exposure, Black Lives Matter affiliation, social media activism, gender, and race were used as independent variables. Data was analyzed using regression analysis sorted according to the advertisement the participant was exposed to (Table 5).

Table 5. Non-Black Demographics: Validity

Message Intervention	*n*	R^2	Significance F
Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging)	76	0.34	0.00
Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging)	89	0.14	0.01
Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging)	94	0.39	0.00
Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging)	73	0.48	0.00

Results

Social Media Activism

Respondents who viewed Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging), Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging), and Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging)

were not more likely to have PI if they actively shared the Black Lives Matter message on social media nor did the frequency of posting increase PI (Table 6). However, Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging) exhibited a positive statistically significant impact on PI among respondents who reported to share the Black Lives Matter movement on social media, regardless of the frequency in which the Black Lives Matter messages are shared.

Table 6. Social Media Activism and Frequency

Message Intervention	Coefficient	*p*	Coefficient	*p*
Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging)	0.47	0.74	-0.61	0.30
Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging)	2.55	0.06	-0.97	0.09
Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging)	1.65	0.04	-0.42	0.10
Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging)	1.75	0.07	-0.73	0.06

Race

Race and Black Lives Matter Movement Support. The data indicates that the race of the participants did not have a statistically significant impact on their PI for Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging), Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging), Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging), and Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging) (Table 7). Therefore, H1 is rejected because the evidence does not show that Black individuals favor advertisements with Black Lives Matter messaging more than their counterparts, resulting in higher PI.

Table 7. Race: All Demographics

Message Intervention	Coefficient	*p*
Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging)	0.11	0.12

Table 7 (Continued).

Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging)	0.02	0.72
Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging)	0.07	0.42
Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging)	-0.09	0.39

Non-Black Individuals and Model Affinity. H2 predicted that non-Black individuals will favor advertisements with Black Lives Matter messaging if they perceived the model to be someone, they find credible, regardless of their race. The data highlights that model affiliation does have a positive statistically significant impact on PI, regardless of the messaging strategy for non-Black individuals (Table 8). However, PI is also significant for neutral messaging (Table 8); thus, rejecting H2.

Table 8. Race: non-Black individuals and Model Affinity

Message Intervention	Coefficient	*p*
Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging)	0.54	0.00
Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging)	0.18	0.03
Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging)	0.58	0.00
Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging)	0.52	0.00

Black Lives Matter Support

H3 predicted that individuals who affiliate with the Black Lives Matter movement would be more likely to have higher PI when exposed to an advertisement with Black Lives Matter messaging than individuals who do not support the Black Lives Matter movement. The data highlights that Black Lives Matter support had a positive statistically significant impact on PI

among participants who were exposed to Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) (Table 9). Additionally, Black Lives Matter support had a statistically significant negative impact on PI among participants who viewed Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging) (Table 9). However, Black Lives Matter support did not have a statistically significant impact on PI among participants who viewed Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging) and Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging).

Table 9. Black Lives Matter Support

Message Intervention	Coefficient	*p*
Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging)	1.39	0.02
Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging)	-0.01	0.98
Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging)	-0.40	0.29
Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging)	-1.08	0.02

Cultural Exposure

Cultural exposure was measured as a correlating variable. This variable was only a significant factor among individuals who viewed Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) (Table 10).

Table 10. Cultural Exposure

Message Intervention	Coefficient	*p*
Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging)	0.12	0.03
Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging)	0.09	0.18
Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging)	0.07	0.31
Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging)	0.06	0.36

Discussion

Social Media Activism

Respondents who viewed Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) revealed that posting Black Lives Matter content on social media does not have a statistically significant impact on PI nor does the frequency in which the Black Lives Matter message is shared (Table 6). Additionally, when individuals are exposed to an advertisement with a Black individual and neutral messaging, their social media activism on behalf of the Black Lives Matter does not impact their PI nor does the frequency in which they share the message. The data (Table 6) highlights how supporting the Black community through conspicuous virtue signaling on social media does not mean that individuals are more likely to have PI when they see an advertisement with a Black model.

However, this research highlights how individuals who share the Black Lives Matter movement on social media are more likely to have PI when exposed to advertisements that contain a non-Black model with Black Lives Matter messaging. The contrast of a non-Black model and Black Lives Matter messaging within the advertisements could have encouraged the respondent to process the information using the central processing route, motivating them to think more deeply on the advertisements to understand the correlation between the two messages (Tukachinsky, 2012; Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). The central processing of the information could be reminding the respondents of activism and information they have encountered surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement, which could have motivated them to support the Black community. This may have encouraged them to support the Black Lives Matter movement by having higher PI (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984), as opposed to Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) and Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging), which could have been more

easily processed through the peripheral route, due to the ease of understanding through peripheral cues (Tukachinsky, 2012; Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). Results showed no significance for the non-Black model and neutral messaging.

When individuals are CVS via social media when exposed to an advertisement that contains both a Black Model and neutral or Black Lives Matter messaging, it is easier for them to process the information peripherally because the cues within the advertisement align easily and there may be no need for elaboration. However, if they are exposed to an advertisement with a non-Black individual and Black Lives Matter messaging, they may be more likely to process the information centrally, which will increase their purchase intentions.

Race

Race and Black Lives Matter Movement Support. H1 predicted that Black individuals would favor advertisements with Black Lives Matter messaging (regardless of the model's race) more than other races and as a result, Black individuals would have higher PI. However, the race of the participant was not a statistically significant indicator of PI, regardless of the messaging that the participants were exposed to (Table 7). When Black individuals are exposed to an advertisement, using Black Lives Matter messaging does not produce a strong enough argument to motivate purchasing nor does the race of the model. Because race of the participant did not play a significant role in motivating PI regardless of the advertisement messaging, it could mean that race does not play a significant role when it comes to supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. Just as the Black Lives Matter movement is relevant to Black individuals, it is also becoming more relevant to individuals of all demographics, as many seek equality for all (Thomas & Horowitz, 2020; Parker, Horowitz, & Anderson 2020).

Non-Black Individuals and Model Affinity. H2 stated that non-Black individuals would favor advertisements with Black Lives Matter messaging if they perceive the model to be someone, they find credible. Of the participants that were exposed to the interventions with Black Lives Matter messaging (Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) and Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging)), model affiliation had a statistically significant positive impact on PI (Table 8). While this data supports H2, Message 2 (Black model and neutral messaging) and Message 4 (non-Black model and neutral messaging) also showed the model affiliation had a positive impact on PI.

Because model affinity had a positive impact on PI, regardless of what advertisement the respondent was exposed to, H2 is rejected. However, the data does show that when individuals are exposed to advertisements with models who look different then themselves (e.g., non-Black individual viewing an ad with a Black model), cultural exposure increases the likelihood of their PI. Further research should explore the impacts of credibility on PI when individuals are exposed to advertisements with social movements.

Black Lives Matter Support

H3 predicted that individuals who support the Black Lives Matter movement would be more likely to have a higher PI when exposed to advertisements with Black Lives Matter messaging than individuals who do not support the Black Lives Matter movement. Despite both Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) and Message 3 (non-Black model and BLM messaging) having Black Lives Matter messaging, only Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) respondents were more likely to have PI if they supported Black Lives Matter (Table 9), thus rejecting H3. These findings highlight how individuals who support the Black Lives Matter movement are more likely to have a higher PI when exposed to an advertisement that

contains both Black Lives Matter messaging and a Black model. For the Black Lives Matter messaging to be potent enough to make an impact among Black Lives Matter supporters, the model within the advertisement also needs to be Black. The Black Lives Matter messaging could have led the Black Lives Matter supporters to process the information centrally due to the relevance it holds to them. The central processing could have led to the respondent to scrutinize the argument more in depth (Tukachinsky, 2012; Freedman & Spyridaskis, 2004; Petty & Caicoppo, 1984). This scrutiny could have motivated them to believe that the model within Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) better fit their idea of what it means to give Black individuals more visibility (Black Lives Matter, n.d.).

However, PI was only more likely within the Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) scenario. Message 2 contained neutral messaging with a Black model, yet Black Lives Matter support did not have a statistically significant impact on PI among these individuals. This data further supports that the Black Lives Matter logo likely motivated central processing, which reminded the Black Lives Matter supporters of their activism. By only seeing a Black model, participants could have processed the information peripherally. The peripheral processing would have prevented the respondent from scrutinizing the message as in depth as they did for Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging).

Participants exposed to Message 4 (Table 9) who supported Black Lives Matter were statistically less likely to have PI for the advertisement that contained a non-Black model and neutral messaging. This could be because the participants are more likely to support brands, they know support similar movements as them (Dotson & Hyatt, 2000; Childs & Kim, 2019). Thus, in order for PI to be increased among Black Lives Matter supporters, advertisements should contain

images with Black models and Black Lives Matter messaging: one without the other will not increase PI and advertisements without both will decrease PI.

Cultural Exposure

Cultural exposure only had a positive impact on PI when respondents were exposed to Message 1 (Black model and BLM messaging) (Table 10). However, cultural exposure did not have a significant impact on PI when viewers were exposed to Message 2 (neutral messaging), which also contained a Black model. This could mean that the race of the model was processed peripherally by the participants while the Black Lives Matter messaging was processed centrally. The centrally processed Black Lives Matter messaging could have caused the respondents to elaborate on the Black Lives Matter movement and why they believe it should be supported. Their support could be rooted in their experience being exposed to others who are different than themselves. The participants' cultural exposure could have increased their empathy for others and as a result decreased the implicit bias, they experience for others different from them (Schwartz et al, 2020).

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to explore the effects of social media activism, specifically the Black Lives Matter movement, on PI. Moreover, it fills the gap in the current body of research, as it expounds upon how CVS can impact purchasing intention using the ELM. The research exposed valuable information for brands' marketing strategies surrounding activism, specifically the BLM movement. When seeking to increase purchase intention among BLM social media activists, marketers should include Black Lives Matter messaging and a non-Black model, as it increases the likelihood of the consumer processing the message centrally. However, if marketers want to strengthen PI among individuals who support BLM on all platforms (e.g.,

social media, protests, word of mouth, etc.), they should utilize advertisements that contain both a Black model and BLM messaging.

Ultimately, when making decisions to target Black Lives Matter activists, marketers should note which type of activist they are trying to engage: social media activists vs. all activists. While these groups are similar, their PI behavior differs. Marketers should also note that when using BLM messaging, the race of the target audience may not impact overall purchasing intentions, likely due to the wide acceptance of the movement. Moreover, to strengthen the PI among individuals who are not Black, marketers should seek to strengthen model affinity among the consumers.

Social desirability was a limitation of this study, as respondents may have provided responses they deemed to be more socially acceptable rather than their actual beliefs and behaviors (Lavrakas, 2008). Additionally, the respondents only viewed one product. If they felt the product was not useful, their purchase intention could have been lower due to the lack of applicability. Lastly, the regression models had lower than desired R^2 (Table 4; Table 5), therefore not all purchasing intention factors were considered within the results.

Future research should include additional purchasing intention factors, such as income, past experiences, values, and perceived product attributes to increase the validity of the regression model. Furthermore, future research should further explore the impacts of contrasting images (e.g., non-Black model and BLM messaging) in facilitating central processing within other social movements (e.g., a prominent Christian figure promoting women's reproductive rights).

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Appendix A: Survey

Checks

Message 1:

1. What was the model eating?
    a. Soup
    b. Salad
    c. Sandwich
    d. The model was not eating

Message 2

1. What type of product was being sold?
    a. Cell phone
    b. Water bottles
    c. Food Services
    d. Bicycles

Message 3

1. What was the model doing?
    a. Yoga
    b. Cycling
    c. Eating
    d. Hiking

Message 4

1. How much did the product cost per week?
    a. $20.00

b. $9.99

c. $5.00

d. $50.00

Purchase Intention

1. Do you have interest in receiving more information regarding the product?
    a. Yes, I would like to speak with a representative over email
    b. Yes, I would like to speak with a representative over the phone
    c. Yes, I would like to visit the website and learn more
    d. No, I don't have any interest at all
2. Based on the advertisement, what impression did you receive of the quality of the product?
    a. Low quality
    b. High quality
    c. Unsure
3. Based on the advertisement, do you think that the product could meet your needs?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure
4. Based on the advertisement, would you recommend this product to a close family member?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

Source Perception: To what extent do you identify with the advertisements?

1. To what extent did the advertisement contain a person whom you want to be like?
    a. Likert Scale: 1 (Not at all) to 6 (Very much)
2. To what extent do you believe that the advertisement contained your type of person?
    a. Likert Scale: 1 (Not at all) to 6 (Very much)
3. To what extent do you believe that the advertisement contained a person who belongs to similar groups as you?
    a. Likert Scale: 1 (Not at all) to 6 (Very much)

Correlates: Cultural Exposure

1. Have you had the opportunity to travel abroad?
    a. Yes
    b. No
2. What countries have you visited?
    a. [list of countries]
3. What was the purpose of your travels? [select all that apply]
    a. Vacation / Recreation
    b. Work
    c. School
    d. Missionary work
    e. Other

Movement Support

1. Which activist movement do you most strongly align with?

   a. Anti-Human Trafficking (e.g. Save the Children, Operation Underground Railroad, etc.)
   b. Racial Justice (e.g. Black Lives Matter, etc.)
   c. Climate Change (e.g. 350.org, Sierra Club, etc.)
   d. Reproductive Rights (e.g. Planned Parenthood, etc).
   e. Other (please specify)

Social Activism

1. Where do you share the movement's message?
   a. In-person protests
   b. Social Media (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc)
   c. Personal conversations
   d. Other (please specify)
   e. None
2. How frequently do you share the movement's message?
   a. Daily
   b. Weekly
   c. Monthly
   d. Less than 6 times per year
3. [Optional]: Why do you support this movement?

Demographics

1. What is your biological sex?
   a. Male
   b. Female

    c. Other / Prefer not to disclose

2. What zip code have you spent the most amount of time living in?
    a. [free response]
3. What year were you born?
    a. [free response]
4. What race are you?
    a. Black / African American
    b. White / Cacuasian American
    c. Asain American
    d. Polyneisan / Pacific Islander
    e. Hispanic