

# Fan Critique & Creative Control

Exploring how the internet and social media has empowered marginalized groups to speak up and influence change from creators.

the**lab**

# In her recent music video, Taylor Swift was criticised for perpetuating fatphobia

In the music video for 'Anti-Hero' the pop star sings about her worst nightmares, one of which is her standing on a scale as she reads the word "FAT". Swift quickly received a lot of backlash online, accusing her of being fat-phobic and insensitive to other body types.



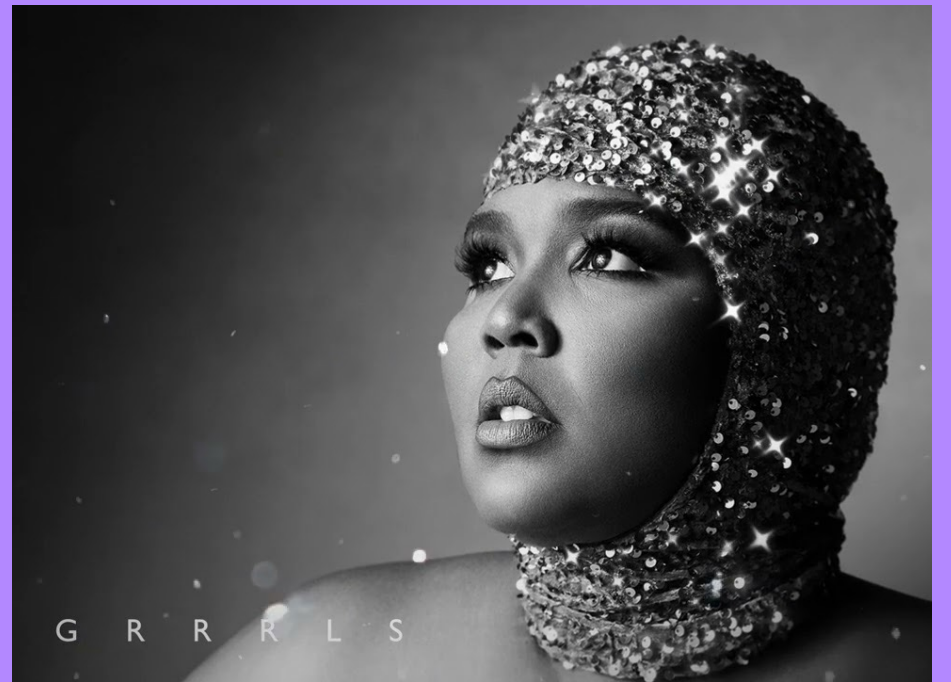
In response to the reaction, Swift removed the scene from her music video.

**“Fat people don’t need to have it reiterated yet again that it’s everyone’s worst nightmare to look like us.” – Shira Rose**



# This is the latest in a series of **post-release changes to songs**

Similar incidents have happened recently with both Beyonce and Lizzo in their songs. After receiving backlash accusing the artists of using an “ableist slur”, they both removed the lyric from their music and re-released their songs to streaming platforms.



**“I’m dedicated to being part of the change I’m waiting to see in the world.” –Lizzo**

Many praised the stars for being receptive to their concerns, setting a precedent to responding to backlash and acting quickly.



# The Lab conversation tracking: **Cultural Throughlines**

The pushback from audiences against content creators they find fault with, intersects with several cultural nerves that we have been monitoring at The Lab via our Cultural Throughlines framework.

## Cultural Throughlines:

- **Digital culture:** The movement towards digital activism
- **Pop culture:** The spread of 'woke' culture

The internet is giving everyday people a way to speak up about offence to artists, corporations and institutions that in the past would have been difficult to reach. By voicing their opinions, consumers have been able to force change, lifting expectations on accountability and collective impact.

# Rising expectations on **responses to backlash**

Against the context of these 'rewrite' examples and the movement towards digital activism, brands need to be increasingly careful of the messages they share. As we saw with Pepsi and more recently Adidas, today's digitally connected customers expect fast responses and reactions from brands or creators facing backlash on discriminatory or offensive content.



# A shift in the creator-consumer **relationship dynamic**

These recent examples also signal a changing relationship we have with content creators and our expectations of them as audiences.

Artists were once able to put work out into the world and it was taken at face value. These incidents have shown that now consumers can influence and change the original artistic output with activism. The expectation to modify and evolve artistic work based on our reactions to the content blurs the lines of ownership and control in ways that were not previously a consideration for artists.



# What does this mean **for brands?**



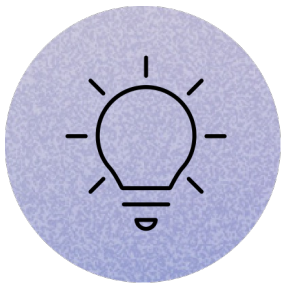
If people expect to be able to feedback (and influence) the culture they consume, will this mean the same for brand experiences and communications?

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For brands, the art of authentic responses and taking adequate action (or to justify none) when facing criticism, is something that customers expect and praise when done well.

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As the lines of creator & consumer blur, how might the expectation for co-creation or evolutions come to life in your category or with your customers?

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Thank **you** 🙌

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