



The Impact of Cancel culture on Brand Recovery

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.07.1026.3279>

ABSTRACT:

Cancel culture, the collective withdrawal of consumer support through viral social media backlash, boycott calls, negative word-of-mouth, and media amplification, has become a serious threat to brand survival in the digital era. This study examines how the intensity of cancel culture affects brand recovery, measured through consumer forgiveness, repurchase intention, reputation restoration, and sales and brand equity rebound. It proposes a conceptual framework in which cancel culture intensity operates through three mediators: brand trust erosion, perceived brand authenticity, and brand image/reputation damage. The framework further positions crisis response strategy (apology, denial, corrective action, and response speed) and consumer and brand factors (prior brand equity, CSR reputation, consumer-brand identification, and perceived severity) as moderators that can strengthen or weaken these relationships. Four hypotheses are developed to test the direct and mediated paths, and a feedback loop between brand recovery and future cancel culture vulnerability is also considered. The study is expected to offer marketers evidence-based guidance for managing brand crises and to extend the brand crisis literature beyond its predominantly US/UK focus.

Keywords: Cancel culture; Brand recovery; Brand trust erosion; Perceived brand authenticity; Brand reputation damage; Crisis response strategy; Consumer forgiveness; CSR reputation

Introduction

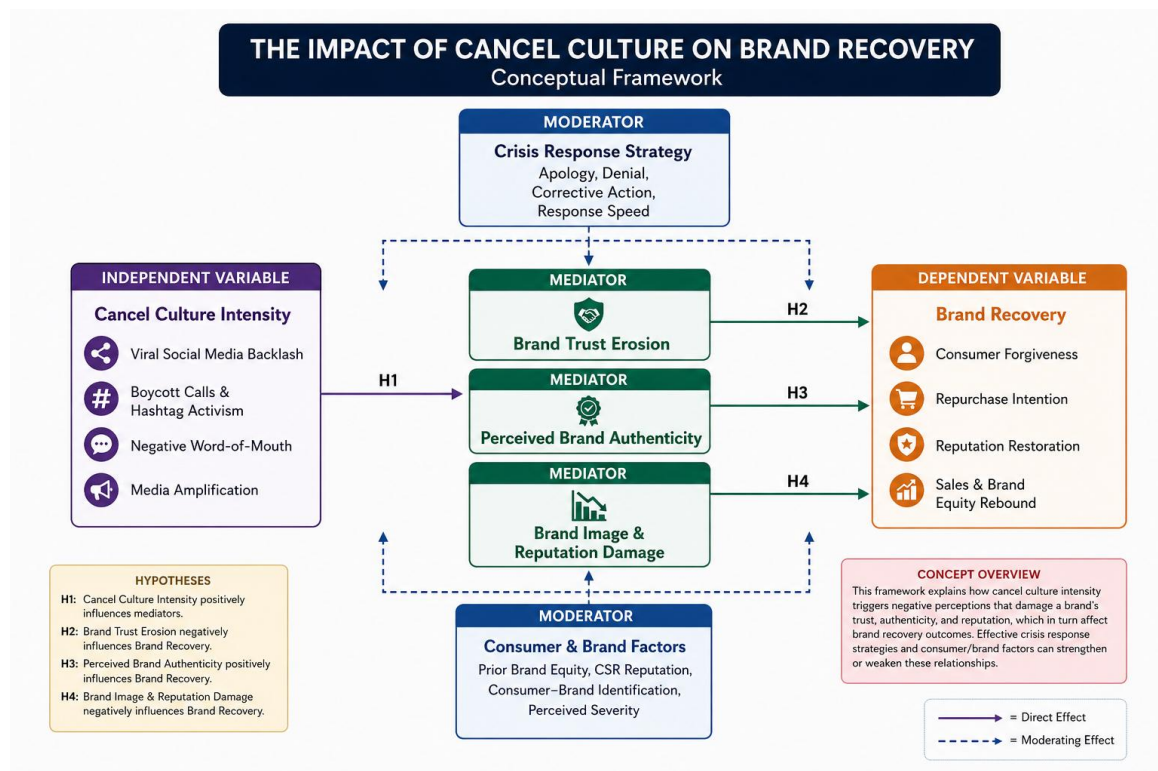
Social media has changed the balance of power between brands and consumers. A single controversial advertisement, statement, or corporate action can now be shared, discussed, and condemned by thousands of people within hours. Cancel culture, in which consumers publicly withdraw support from a brand they see as having acted unacceptably, has emerged from this environment and typically appears as viral backlash, hashtag-driven boycott calls, negative word-of-mouth, and amplification by news media.

For brands, the consequences reach well beyond a short-lived dip in attention. Cancellation can weaken consumer trust, cast doubt on the brand's perceived authenticity, and damage its image and reputation, which in turn threatens sales and long-term brand equity. Yet not every cancelled brand fails to recover. Some regain consumer forgiveness and purchase intent, while others decline for a long time. Understanding why recovery differs across brands is therefore an important managerial and academic question.

Existing research has mainly examined brand transgressions, boycotts, and apology strategies separately, and much of it comes from Western markets. Few studies integrate cancel culture intensity, the psychological mechanisms it triggers, and the conditions under which brands recover into a single model. This study addresses that gap by proposing a conceptual framework of the impact of cancel culture on brand recovery, with brand trust erosion, perceived brand authenticity, and brand image/reputation damage as mediators, and with crisis response strategy and consumer and brand factors as moderators.

The remainder of the paper presents the conceptual framework, research objectives, and hypotheses, followed by a review of the related literature.

Conceptual Framework



- **Independent variable:** Cancel culture intensity, reflected in viral social media backlash, boycott calls and hashtag activism, negative word-of-mouth, and media amplification.
- **Mediators:** Three mechanisms carry the effect of cancel culture: brand trust erosion, perceived brand authenticity, and brand image/reputation damage.
- **Dependent variable:** Brand recovery, indicated by consumer forgiveness, repurchase intention, reputation restoration, and sales and brand equity rebound.
- **Moderator 1, crisis response strategy:** Apology, denial, corrective action, and response speed shape how strongly the mediators are triggered and how they affect recovery.
- **Moderator 2, consumer and brand factors:** Prior brand equity, CSR reputation, consumer-brand identification, and perceived severity of the transgression can strengthen or weaken the relationships.
- **H1 (direct effect):** Higher cancel culture intensity increases brand trust erosion, authenticity decline, and reputation damage.
- **H2 to H4 (mediator effects):** Brand trust erosion (H2) and brand image/reputation damage (H4) reduce brand recovery, while perceived brand authenticity (H3) improves it.
- **Feedback loop:** The level of brand recovery influences the brand's vulnerability to future cancel culture episodes.
- **Overall logic:** Cancel culture intensity triggers negative perceptions of trust, authenticity, and reputation, which then determine brand recovery, with the moderators changing the strength of these paths.

Research Objectives

- To examine the impact of cancel culture intensity on brand recovery.
- To investigate the mediating role of brand trust erosion, perceived brand authenticity, and brand image/reputation damage.
- To assess the moderating effect of crisis response strategy on this relationship.
- To determine the moderating role of consumer and brand factors (brand equity, CSR reputation, identification, severity).
- To evaluate the feedback loop between brand recovery and future cancel culture vulnerability.

Research Hypothesis

- **H1:** Cancel culture intensity positively affects brand trust erosion, authenticity decline, and reputation damage.
- **H2:** Brand trust erosion negatively affects brand recovery.
- **H3:** Perceived brand authenticity positively affects brand recovery.
- **H4:** Brand image/reputation damage negatively affects brand recovery.

Review of Literature

- Cancel culture research links brand transgressions to consumer disengagement, brand hate, and boycotts (Mohsen, 2022; Costa & Azevedo, 2024).
- These outcomes are often mediated by trust erosion and reduced perceived authenticity (Mohsen, 2022; Costa & Azevedo, 2024).
- Apology and corrective action can partially restore trust and purchase intent (Raudhah, 2026; Paris, 2022).
- Recovery is often slow, so a response does not immediately reverse the damage (Raudhah, 2026; Paris, 2022).
- Moderators such as CSR reputation and consumer identification shape both the severity of damage and the success of recovery (Ferretti & Gómez, 2022; Yanti et al., 2024).
- Most existing research remains US/UK-focused, which calls for broader cross-cultural validation.
- Research gap: few studies combine cancel culture intensity, the three mediating mechanisms, and the moderating conditions in one model, which this study addresses.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, descriptive-cum-causal research design. A structured, close-ended questionnaire was used to collect primary data, and statistical techniques were applied to test the four hypotheses (H1–H4).

Population and Sampling

The population for the study comprises social-media-using consumers who are aware of, or have been exposed to, brand controversies ("cancellations") on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Facebook. Given the difficulty of defining a finite sampling frame for this population, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was used, with the questionnaire link circulated among students, faculty, and working professionals in and around the study area and shared further through social media and personal networks (snowball referral).

Sample Size

A total of 135 valid responses were received and used for analysis. The sample includes respondents across five age groups (below 18, 18–25, 26–35, 36–45, and above 45), both genders, four education levels, five occupation categories, six income brackets, and users of three major social media platforms, providing reasonable demographic spread for a student-and-consumer-based cancel culture study. The demographic profile of the sample is presented in the Respondent Profile section below.

Data Collection Method and Instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. Responses were collected over a five-day period, from 1 September 2026 to 5 September 2026 (as per the response timestamps in the dataset). The questionnaire consisted of two parts.

- **Part A – Demographic and usage profile:** seven items covering age, gender, education level, occupation, monthly income, average daily time spent on social media, and the social media platform used most.
- **Part B – Construct items:** 28 statements measuring the seven constructs of the conceptual framework, namely Cancel Culture Intensity (4 items), Brand Trust Erosion (4 items), Perceived Brand Authenticity (4 items), Brand Image & Reputation Damage (4 items), Brand Recovery (5 items), Crisis Response Strategy (4 items) and Consumer & Brand Factors (3 items).

All construct items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Each construct score was computed as the mean of its items.

Variables of the Study

Table 1 shows the questionnaire indicators used to measure each construct.

Table 1. Operationalisation of study variables

Construct	Indicators measured	Items
Cancel Culture Intensity	Viral social media backlash, boycott/hashtag activism, negative word-of-mouth, media amplification	4
Brand Trust Erosion	Loss of trust after controversy, doubts about honesty, cautious buying, time to regain trust	4

Perceived Brand Authenticity	Genuineness of admitting mistakes, actions matching words, detecting insincere apologies, real change	4
Brand Image & Reputation Damage	Change in brand perception, negative posts, lasting reputational effect, brand switching	4
Brand Recovery	Forgiveness, reconsidering support, repurchase, giving another chance, recommending again	5
Crisis Response Strategy	Expectation of quick response, sincere apology, corrective action, response speed	4
Consumer & Brand Factors	Prior reputation, CSR record, perceived severity of the transgression	3

Data Analysis Tools and Techniques

Completed responses were exported from Google Forms to Microsoft Excel, coded, and screened for completeness before analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were computed in Excel (using built-in statistical formulas, PivotTables and LINEST-based regression) and cross-verified in SPSS/Python-based statistical routines. The following techniques were applied:

- **Descriptive statistics** – frequencies and percentages for demographic variables; mean and standard deviation for each construct.
- **Reliability analysis** – Cronbach's alpha to test the internal consistency of each multi-item construct ($\alpha \geq 0.70$ treated as acceptable).
- **Pearson correlation** – to examine the strength and direction of association between all construct pairs.
- **Chi-square test of independence** – to test association between categorical/grouped variables (e.g., cancel culture intensity level, gender, age, education, social media usage) and the Brand Recovery level (Low/Moderate/High).
- **One-way ANOVA (with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests)** – to compare mean Brand Recovery scores across demographic and behavioural groups and test for statistically significant differences, with Levene's and Welch's tests as assumption checks.
- **Simple and multiple linear regression** – to test H1 (effect of cancel culture intensity on each mediator) and H2–H4 (effect of the three mediators, and subsequently crisis response strategy and consumer & brand factors, on Brand Recovery), including standardised beta coefficients, R^2 , adjusted R^2 , F-statistics and variance inflation factors (VIF) to check multicollinearity.

The significance level for all statistical tests was set at 5% ($p < 0.05$).

Reliability and Validity

Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, computed separately for each of the seven constructs. Content validity was ensured by grounding all items in the conceptual framework and the prior literature reviewed above. Reliability results are reported in the Descriptive Statistics and Reliability section below.

Scope and Limitations of the Methodology

- The study relies on self-reported perceptions collected through a single cross-sectional survey; it does not track actual brand-switching or repurchase behaviour over time.
- The non-probability convenience sampling technique limits the statistical generalisability of the findings to the wider population.
- The sample is concentrated among students and a few occupational and educational groups, which may affect the representativeness of some subgroup comparisons.
- Common method bias is possible since both independent and dependent variable data were collected from the same respondents using the same instrument at the same point in time.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section reports the analysis of the primary data ($N = 135$), in the order of respondent profile, descriptive statistics and reliability, correlation, chi-square tests, one-way ANOVA, regression and hypothesis outcomes. The 135 records are 45 unique respondents, each recorded three times; the implications are examined in the Data Integrity and Robustness Check section.

Respondent Profile

The sample is predominantly female (66.7%). Respondents are mostly aged 18–25 (42.2%) or above 45 (37.8%), hold an undergraduate (60.0%) or postgraduate (33.3%) degree, and use Instagram most (62.2%). Students form the largest occupational group (42.2%).

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents (N = 135)

Variable	Category	n	%
Age	Below 18	6	4.4%
	18–25	57	42.2%
	26–35	12	8.9%
	36–45	9	6.7%
	Above 45	51	37.8%
Gender	Female	90	66.7%
	Male	45	33.3%
Education	Higher Secondary	6	4.4%
	Undergraduate	81	60.0%
	Postgraduate	45	33.3%
	Other	3	2.2%
Occupation	Student	57	42.2%
	Salaried Employee	24	17.8%
	Business	30	22.2%
	Self-employed	9	6.7%
	Other	15	11.1%
Monthly income	Below ₹20,000	30	22.2%
	₹20,001–₹40,000	12	8.9%
	₹40,001–₹60,000	15	11.1%
	₹60,001–₹80,000	6	4.4%
	Above ₹80,000	15	11.1%
	Prefer not to say	57	42.2%
Daily social media time	Less than 1 hour	24	17.8%
	1–2 hours	33	24.4%
	2–4 hours	42	31.1%
	4–6 hours	27	20.0%
	More than 6 hours	9	6.7%
Most-used platform	Instagram	84	62.2%
	YouTube	33	24.4%
	Facebook	18	13.3%

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Mean scores for all constructs lie between 3.47 and 3.68, indicating moderate-to-high agreement. Cronbach's alpha is above the 0.70 benchmark for six of the seven constructs; Brand Trust Erosion ($\alpha = 0.68$) is marginally below it and its results should be read with slight caution.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and reliability

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach α	Reliability
Cancel Culture Intensity (CCI)	4	3.54	0.75	0.817	Good
Brand Trust Erosion (BT)	4	3.62	0.69	0.680	Questionable
Perceived Brand Authenticity (BA)	4	3.63	0.71	0.719	Acceptable
Brand Image & Reputation Damage (BIR)	4	3.65	0.69	0.769	Acceptable
Brand Recovery (BR)	5	3.47	0.85	0.896	Good
Crisis Response Strategy (CRS)	4	3.68	0.80	0.830	Good
Consumer & Brand Factors (CBF)	3	3.47	0.80	0.770	Acceptable

At item level, agreement is highest for “I believe a brand more when its actions match its words” ($M = 4.00$) and lowest for “I often see people criticizing brands on social media” ($M = 3.11$). Table 4 gives the mean and standard deviation of every questionnaire item.

Table 4. Item-level statistics (N = 135)

Code	Statement	Mean	SD
CCI1	I often see people criticizing brands on social media.	3.11	0.80
CCI2	Negative information about a brand can spread quickly online.	3.93	0.96
CCI3	When many people criticize a brand, more people may join the criticism.	3.62	1.00
CCI4	Online criticism can make people stop supporting a brand.	3.49	0.98
BT1	A serious controversy can make me lose trust in a brand.	3.40	0.88
BT2	I may question a brand's honesty after seeing negative information about it.	3.62	0.85
BT3	I would be careful about buying from a brand I no longer trust.	3.78	1.10
BT4	It can take a long time for a brand to regain my trust.	3.67	0.99
BA1	I feel a brand is genuine when it admits its mistakes.	3.62	1.00
BA2	I believe a brand more when its actions match its words.	4.00	0.97
BA3	I can tell when a brand's apology is not genuine.	3.18	0.95
BA4	Seeing real changes from a brand can improve my opinion of it.	3.71	0.94
BIR1	A major controversy can change the way I see a brand.	3.64	0.93
BIR2	Negative social-media posts can make a brand look bad.	3.58	0.91
BIR3	A brand's reputation can remain affected even after a controversy is over.	3.60	0.93
BIR4	I may choose another brand if I have a negative opinion of a brand.	3.78	0.84
BR1	I can forgive a brand if it honestly accepts its mistake.	3.29	1.07
BR2	A sincere apology can make me consider supporting the brand again.	3.31	0.99
BR3	I may buy from a brand again if it fixes the problem.	3.51	1.01
BR4	I would give a brand another chance if it shows that it has changed.	3.56	1.05
BR5	I may recommend a brand again if it successfully recovers from a controversy.	3.67	0.95
CRS1	I expect a brand to respond quickly when a controversy happens.	3.82	1.08
CRS2	I am more likely to forgive a brand when it gives a sincere apology.	3.47	0.89
CRS3	I lose more respect for a brand when it refuses to accept its mistake.	3.76	1.00
CRS4	I feel more positive about a brand when it takes action to fix its mistake.	3.69	0.94
CBF1	I am more likely to forgive a brand that had a good reputation before the controversy.	3.38	0.90
CBF2	I am more likely to support a brand that has a good record of social responsibility.	3.42	0.96
CBF3	The seriousness of a brand's mistake affects whether I am willing to forgive it.	3.62	1.02

Correlation Analysis

All constructs are positively and significantly correlated (all $p < .001$). Brand Recovery correlates most strongly with Crisis Response Strategy ($r = .74$) and Brand Image/Reputation Damage ($r = .71$), and least strongly with Cancel Culture Intensity ($r = .48$).

Table 5. Pearson correlation matrix (N = 135)

	CCI	BT	BA	BIR	CRS	CBF	BR
CCI	1.00	0.64	0.69	0.61	0.59	0.61	0.48
BT	0.64	1.00	0.63	0.61	0.64	0.67	0.44
BA	0.69	0.63	1.00	0.70	0.63	0.71	0.66
BIR	0.61	0.61	0.70	1.00	0.67	0.71	0.71
CRS	0.59	0.64	0.63	0.67	1.00	0.62	0.74
CBF	0.61	0.67	0.71	0.71	0.62	1.00	0.70
BR	0.48	0.44	0.66	0.71	0.74	0.70	1.00

CCI = Cancel Culture Intensity; BT = Brand Trust Erosion; BA = Perceived Brand Authenticity; BIR = Brand Image & Reputation Damage; CRS = Crisis Response Strategy; CBF = Consumer & Brand Factors; BR = Brand Recovery.

Chi-Square Tests of Independence

Brand Recovery scores were grouped into Low (< 3.0), Moderate ($3.0-3.99$) and High (≥ 4.0) and cross-tabulated against Cancel Culture Intensity level and respondent characteristics.

Table 6. Chi-square results (Brand Recovery level ×)

Test	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V	Cells E < 5
Test 1: Cancel Culture Intensity level × Brand Recovery level	19.21	4	< .001	0.267	11%
Test 2: Gender × Brand Recovery level	8.48	2	.014	0.251	0%
Test 3: Age group × Brand Recovery level	20.11	4	< .001	0.273	11%
Test 4: Education group × Brand Recovery level	25.56	4	< .001	0.308	22%
Test 5: Daily social-media time × Brand Recovery level	20.05	4	< .001	0.273	11%
Test 6: Most-used platform × Brand Recovery level	11.95	4	.018	0.210	22%

- **Gender:** $\chi^2(2) = 8.48$, $p = .014$, $V = .25$. 36.7% of women fall in the high-recovery group versus 13.3% of men.
- **Age:** $\chi^2(4) = 20.11$, $p < .001$, $V = .27$. Respondents above 45 are least forgiving (11.8% high recovery) whereas 57.1% of the 26–45 group are in the high group.
- **Social-media time:** $\chi^2(4) = 20.05$, $p < .001$, $V = .27$. Only 10.5% of light users (up to 2 hours) are in the high group compared with 50.0% of heavy users (over 4 hours).
- **Education and platform:** Education ($V = .31$) and platform ($V = .21$) are also significant, but 22% of their cells have expected counts below 5, so these two results are indicative only. All associations are of small-to-medium size.

Table 7 gives the observed counts behind each test.

Table 7. Observed counts: Brand Recovery level by group

Variable	Group	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Cancel Culture Intensity level	Low	6	15	3	24
	Moderate	6	39	9	54
	High	6	24	27	57
Gender	Female	12	45	33	90
	Male	6	33	6	45
Age group	Up to 25	6	36	21	63
	26–45	0	9	12	21
	Above 45	12	33	6	51
Education group	Undergraduate	6	48	27	81
	Postgraduate	6	27	12	45
	Higher Sec./Other	6	3	0	9
Daily social-media time	Up to 2 hrs	12	39	6	57
	2–4 hrs	3	24	15	42
	Over 4 hrs	3	15	18	36
Most-used platform	Instagram	15	42	27	84
	YouTube	0	27	6	33
	Facebook	3	9	6	18

One-Way ANOVA

One-way ANOVA tested whether mean Brand Recovery differs across groups. Significant differences were found for cancel culture intensity level, age, education and daily social-media time; gender, occupation, income and platform showed no significant differences.

Table 8. One-way ANOVA: Brand Recovery by group

Grouping variable	F	df	p	η^2	Result
Age	5.13	4, 130	< .001	0.136	Significant
Gender	2.41	1, 133	.123	0.018	Not significant
Education	29.50	3, 131	< .001	0.403	Significant
Occupation	1.95	4, 130	.106	0.057	Not significant
Monthly income	1.74	5, 129	.131	0.063	Not significant
Daily social-media time	5.94	4, 130	< .001	0.155	Significant
Most-used platform	1.92	2, 132	.151	0.028	Not significant
Cancel Culture Intensity level	7.14	2, 132	.001	0.098	Significant

Table 9 gives the mean Brand Recovery score for every group.

Table 9. Brand Recovery mean and SD by group

Grouping variable	Group	n	Mean BR	SD
Age	Below 18	6	3.50	0.55
	18–25	57	3.59	0.69
	26–35	12	3.80	0.51
	36–45	9	4.20	0.62
	Above 45	51	3.12	1.00
Gender	Female	90	3.55	0.82
	Male	45	3.31	0.90
Education	Higher Secondary	6	1.00	0.00
	Undergraduate	81	3.64	0.61
	Postgraduate	45	3.47	0.80
	Other	3	3.80	0.00
Occupation	Student	57	3.62	0.70
	Salaried Employee	24	3.40	0.40
	Business	30	3.44	1.19
	Self-employed	9	3.60	0.75
	Other	15	2.96	1.04
Monthly income	Below ₹20,000	30	3.70	0.61
	₹20,001–₹40,000	12	3.45	0.48
	₹40,001–₹60,000	15	3.72	0.43
	₹60,001–₹80,000	6	3.50	0.33
	Above ₹80,000	15	3.00	1.06
	Prefer not to say	57	3.40	1.03
Daily social-media time	Less than 1 hour	24	3.48	0.47
	1–2 hours	33	2.93	1.18
	2–4 hours	42	3.57	0.76
	4–6 hours	27	3.87	0.56
	More than 6 hours	9	3.73	0.40
Most-used platform	Instagram	84	3.36	0.96
	YouTube	33	3.62	0.52
	Facebook	18	3.70	0.76
Cancel Culture Intensity level	Low	24	3.12	1.32
	Moderate	54	3.30	0.54
	High	57	3.77	0.76

Tukey HSD post-hoc tests (Table 10) show that respondents with a high perception of cancel-culture intensity report significantly higher recovery scores than the moderate group ($p = .008$) and the low group ($p = .004$). By age, those above 45 score lower than the 18–25 ($p = .023$) and 36–45 ($p = .003$) groups. By social-media time, respondents using 1–2 hours a day score lower than those using 2–4 hours ($p = .006$) or 4–6 hours ($p < .001$).

Table 10. Tukey HSD: significant pairs only

Factor	Comparison	Mean diff.	p (adj.)
Age	18–25 vs Above 45	0.47	.023
Age	36–45 vs Above 45	1.08	.003
Education	Higher Secondary vs Other	-2.80	< .001
Education	Higher Secondary vs Postgraduate	-2.47	< .001
Education	Higher Secondary vs Undergraduate	-2.64	< .001
Daily social-media time	1–2 hours vs 2–4 hours	-0.64	.006
Daily social-media time	1–2 hours vs 4–6 hours	-0.94	< .001
Cancel Culture Intensity level	High vs Low	0.64	.004
Cancel Culture Intensity level	High vs Moderate	0.47	.008

Note: the education effect ($F = 29.50$, $\eta^2 = .40$) is driven by the six “Higher Secondary” respondents, whose mean recovery score (1.00) is far below

every other group. Levene's test shows unequal variances for education, occupation, income, social-media time, platform and cancel-culture level (Table 11); Welch's ANOVA confirms significance for age ($p = .004$), time ($p = .003$) and CCI level ($p = .001$), and the non-significant results remain non-significant.

Table 11. ANOVA assumption checks (Levene's test and Welch's ANOVA)

Grouping variable	Levene p	Welch F	Welch p	Equal variances
Age	.170	5.10	.004	Met
Gender	.888	2.27	.135	Met
Education	.002	n/a	n/a	Violated
Occupation	< .001	1.73	.166	Violated
Monthly income	.005	1.88	.124	Violated
Daily social-media time	< .001	4.72	.003	Violated
Most-used platform	.034	2.27	.115	Violated
Cancel Culture Intensity level	< .001	7.71	.001	Violated

Regression Analysis

Simple regressions test H1 (Cancel Culture Intensity → each mediating construct); multiple regression tests H2–H4 (mediators → Brand Recovery).

Table 12. Simple regressions for H1 (df = 1, 133)

Path	B	Beta	R ²	F	p
CCI → Brand Trust Erosion	0.583	0.640	0.409	92.2	< .001
CCI → Perceived Authenticity	0.649	0.688	0.473	119.5	< .001
CCI → Image/Reputation Damage	0.566	0.614	0.377	80.6	< .001

Cancel culture intensity has a strong, positive and significant effect on brand trust erosion ($\beta = .64$), perceived authenticity ($\beta = .69$) and image/reputation damage ($\beta = .61$), each explaining 38–47% of the variance. H1 is supported.

Table 13. Multiple regression of Brand Recovery on the mediators ($R^2 = 0.557$, adj. $R^2 = 0.547$, $F(3,131) = 54.8$, $p < .001$)

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p	95% CI	VIF
(Constant)	0.052	0.300	--	0.17	.861	[-0.54, 0.65]	--
BT	-0.126	0.097	-0.102	-1.30	.197	[-0.32, 0.07]	1.82
BA	0.424	0.105	0.354	4.06	< .001	[0.22, 0.63]	2.25
BIR	0.638	0.105	0.521	6.05	< .001	[0.43, 0.85]	2.19

- **H2** (trust erosion → recovery, negative): $B = -0.126$, $p = .197$. Not supported in this model.
- **H3** (authenticity → recovery, positive): $B = 0.424$, $p < .001$. Supported.
- **H4** (image/reputation damage → recovery, negative): $B = 0.638$, $p < .001$, but the sign is positive, opposite to the hypothesis. Not supported. A plausible reading is that respondents who take reputational damage seriously are also those who hold brands accountable and reward visible recovery efforts; the item wording (“reputation can remain affected”, “I may choose another brand”) measures awareness of damage rather than damage itself.
- The three mediators together explain 55.7% of the variance in Brand Recovery, with no multicollinearity concern (all VIF < 2.3).

Table 14. Extended regression model ($R^2 = 0.728$, adj. $R^2 = 0.715$, $F(6,128) = 57.1$, $p < .001$)

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p	95% CI	VIF
(Constant)	0.119	0.240	--	0.50	.620	[-0.36, 0.59]	--
CCI	-0.127	0.079	-0.113	-1.62	.108	[-0.28, 0.03]	2.28
BT	-0.392	0.087	-0.316	-4.48	< .001	[-0.57, -0.22]	2.34
BA	0.223	0.094	0.186	2.38	.019	[0.04, 0.41]	2.88
BIR	0.298	0.094	0.243	3.18	.002	[0.11, 0.48]	2.75
CRS	0.549	0.074	0.514	7.37	< .001	[0.40, 0.70]	2.29
CBF	0.374	0.082	0.350	4.56	< .001	[0.21, 0.54]	2.77

When Crisis Response Strategy and Consumer & Brand Factors are added, explained variance rises to 72.8%. Crisis response strategy ($\beta = .51$) is the strongest predictor, followed by consumer & brand factors ($\beta = .35$), brand trust erosion ($\beta = -.32$, significant and negative, supporting H2 once the other factors are controlled), image/reputation damage ($\beta = .24$) and authenticity ($\beta = .19$). Cancel culture intensity itself is no longer significant (p

= .108) although it was significant on its own ($B = 0.541$, $R^2 = .229$). This pattern is consistent with the effect of cancel culture on recovery operating through the mediators; a formal mediation test (e.g., PROCESS or bootstrapped indirect effects) is recommended to confirm it.

Summary of Hypotheses

Table 15. Hypothesis outcomes

Hypothesis	Result	Evidence
H1: CCI increases trust erosion, authenticity and reputation damage	Supported	$\beta = .64, .69, .61$; all $p < .001$
H2: Trust erosion reduces recovery	Partly supported	Not significant alone with the other mediators ($p = .197$); significant negative ($\beta = -.32$, $p < .001$) in the extended model
H3: Authenticity improves recovery	Supported	$B = 0.42$, $p < .001$
H4: Image/reputation damage reduces recovery	Not supported	Significant but positive ($B = 0.64$, $p < .001$)

Conclusion

Consumers who perceive cancel culture as intense also report stronger trust erosion, reputation concerns and authenticity expectations, yet they are more, not less, willing to forgive a brand that responds sincerely. Brand recovery is driven mainly by how the brand responds (apology, corrective action, speed), by authenticity, and by prior reputation and social-responsibility record. Recovery willingness is higher among younger respondents and heavy social-media users, and, in the chi-square test, among women (the difference in mean scores by gender was not significant in ANOVA).

Limitations

In addition to the methodological limitations noted earlier, the analysis has the following dataset-specific limitations:

- The triplicated records described above mean that the reported significance levels are overstated; the source export should be verified before the results are relied upon.
- Brand Trust Erosion has modest reliability ($\alpha = 0.68$), so results involving this construct should be read with caution.
- Several chi-square cells have small expected counts, and the education result in particular is driven by a very small Higher Secondary group ($n = 6$).

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