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# Capitalism, revisited: Gillette and Canada Goose find new markets in social justice

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*"The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society." (**Marx and Engels, 1848** (<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/317440/the-communist-manifesto-by-friedrich-engels-and-karl-marx-translated-by-samuel-moore/9780141395906/readers-guide/>)).*

When Pepsi released an advertising campaign in 2017 featuring Kendall Jenner as she offered a pick-me-up soda to a riot police officer, the loosely defined social justice online community was appalled by the commercial. Pepsi was ridiculed for **co-opting protest imagery** (<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/apr/05/pepsi-kendall-jenner-pepsi-apology-ad-protest>), for tapping into **social justice currency** (<https://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/raluca-bejan/2017/04/pulled-pepsi-ad-taps-currency-social-justice>), and overall, for finding a new market to profitably dispose of its products. The company was publicly forced to pull its ad.

Fast forward two years later and a similar commodifying logic is publicly commended. In January 2019, the razor company Gillette successfully capitalized on the MeToo movement to launch an advertising campaign intended to symbolically tackle the idea of toxic masculinity. Yet, instead of eliciting public anger -- after all, the profitable American company, a subsidiary of Procter & Gamble is amongst the 32 most valuable global brands due to an annual revenue of \$6.6 billion and a trademark value of **\$17.2 billion** (<https://www.forbes.com/companies/gillette/#7d6bf57d10a0>) -- Gillette has been widely praised for dipping its corporate tentacles into a new market.

To put it differently, it is no longer enough that Gillette sells its shavers to over 750 million men on this planet. Gillette discovered a new way to market its products not only to those simply in need of a razor



than 100 years ago, when they discussed capitalism's natural capability to revolutionize its socio-political instruments of production. Thinking that corporate brands need to step up to the plate on issues of public accountability misplaces social responsibility from the state and its citizens to the corporate realm. If a corporate brand practices social responsibility, we, as consumers, keep buying that brand.

A few days after Gillette's advertising campaign, Canada Goose pitched a similar story to the market. Its **Atigi** (<https://www.canadagoose.com/ca/en/honouring-the-north.html>) project, which incorporates traditional Inuit designs to craft a limited edition of winter parkas, shows us that Indigeneity, like toxic masculinity, sells. Canada Goose is capitalizing on Indigeneity not only through selling its overpriced jackets (i.e., the Atigi parkas are to be sold between **\$5,000 and \$7,500** ([https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/canada-goose-unveils-parkas-from-inuit-nunangat-1.5003266?fbclid=IwAR2rBA5otSe8RxTtqwhf4xqxJsYfqNdWnGomEdAJrrfRHWiilB\\_3ZN7CgxE](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/canada-goose-unveils-parkas-from-inuit-nunangat-1.5003266?fbclid=IwAR2rBA5otSe8RxTtqwhf4xqxJsYfqNdWnGomEdAJrrfRHWiilB_3ZN7CgxE))) but also through deriving a symbolic, marketable benefit from the principled choice of incorporating Indigenous design. Let alone that selling Canada Goose parkas will change nothing in the material conditions that continue to oppress Indigenous communities in Canada. Profits from the Atigi project are set to go to the **Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami** ([https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/canada-goose-unveils-parkas-from-inuit-nunangat-1.5003266?fbclid=IwAR2rBA5otSe8RxTtqwhf4xqxJsYfqNdWnGomEdAJrrfRHWiilB\\_3ZN7CgxE](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/canada-goose-unveils-parkas-from-inuit-nunangat-1.5003266?fbclid=IwAR2rBA5otSe8RxTtqwhf4xqxJsYfqNdWnGomEdAJrrfRHWiilB_3ZN7CgxE)), a rights-based, Inuit advocacy organization. Yet, the market exposure for Canada Goose and the substantial tax expenditure that will be cashed in by the company through this benevolent community effort, is, by far, priceless.

Corporations have always found ways to capitalize on the political climate. One can easily think of the United Colors of Benetton's campaign in 1990s, which broadcast a clothing advertisement showing a blood-soaked Croatian military uniform on the **Zagreb-Ljubljana highway** (<https://apnews.com/83dd11f663e4b97caf2026954d083f9d>). In the '90s, a company tapping into such political discourse would expect to be dragged to court for its advertising stratagem, as it was the case with **Benetton** (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/benetton-sued-over-shock-ads-1569139.html>) after all. Nowadays, a company gets commended for its ingenuity in developing these very same campaigns. What a sad state of affairs -- to publicly applaud the corporate industry for finding new markets.

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