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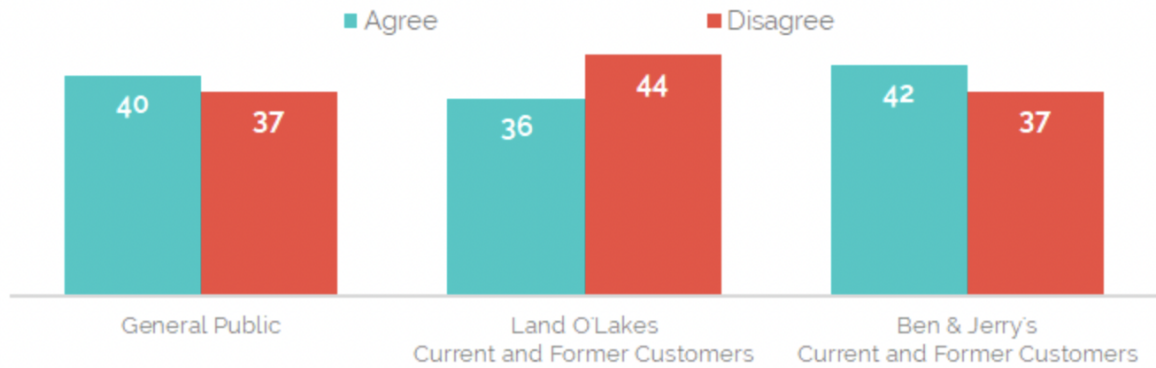
Ben & Jerry's and the BLM Movement

Founded in a renovated gas station in Burlington, Vermont in 1978, Ben & Jerry's has built a reputation of being a socially responsible brand. Childhood friends Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield took a five dollar correspondence course on ice cream making from Pennsylvania State University. Eventually they borrowed \$4000, and invested \$8000 into starting the company. By 1985, the Ben & Jerry's foundation was established to support society-focused projects. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan named Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield smallbusiness persons of the year. In the mid-1990's, Ben and Jerry's was giving away over \$200,000 each year to non-profit organizations. By the end of 1999, Ben & Jerry's annual revenues exceeded \$200 million. In 2000, Unilever acquired Ben & Jerry's. The company was sold for a reported \$237 million. The brand sales have since then grown over the last two decades. In 2019, Ben & Jerry's reported sales totaled \$681.5 million (Marchese, 2020). Last year, Ben & Jerry's reported sales totaled \$863.1 million (Wunsch, 2021) and was named the top ice cream brand in the United States by Statista. They continue to have consistent growth nationwide and around the world. Since being founded, Ben & Jerry's has spoken about issues relating to climate justice, including the rainforest and the great barrier reef, to supporting same-sex marriage rights. Recently, Ben & Jerry's has been making headlines for their stance on Black Lives Matter.

According to a 2020 study conducted by the Pew Research Center, 67% of Americans supported the Black Lives Matter movement. Moreover, a study conducted by the Sheldon Group in 2018, concluded that 86% of consumers believed that companies should take a stand on social issues (Kunda, 2020).

Brands Get Political: Ben & Jerry's and Land O'Lakes

% of US consumers aged 18+ who agree or disagree with the following statement: "I like brands that are willing to get involved in societal issues."

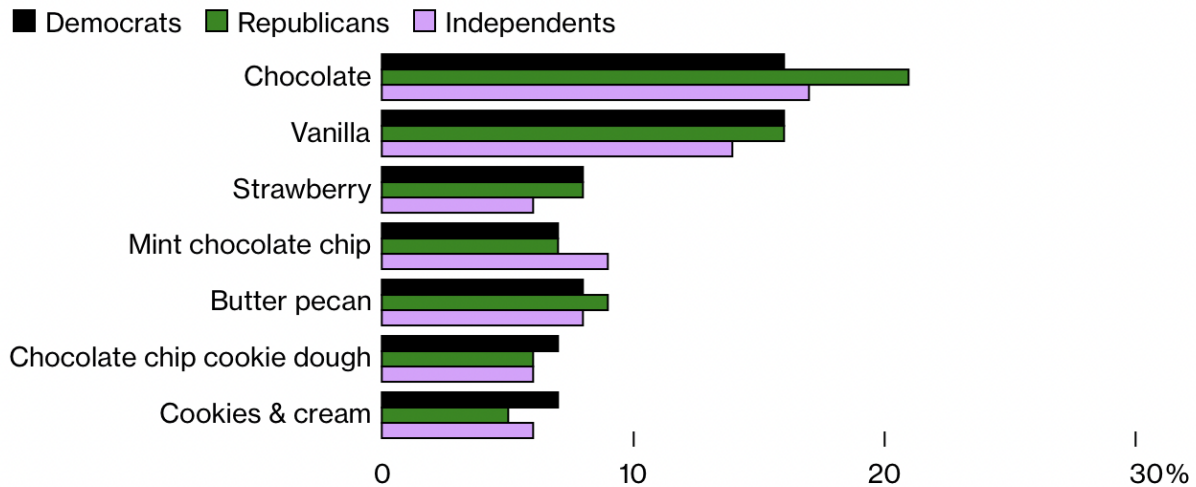


YouGov | yougov.com

YouGov Plan & Track, October 2018

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during an arrest made when a store clerk believed Floyd was using a counterfeit bill. The murder of George Floyd caused protests across all 50 states, demanding for the arrest of all four officers involved in the case, and for the police department in Minneapolis and other large cities across the nation to be defunded. This became such a high-profile case both around the nation as well as worldwide, that it gave corporations no choice but to have to acknowledge it. Google, Microsoft and other U.S. companies expressed solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement but the public accused many of them of hypocrisy. Many consumers believed these companies were taking an opportunity to boost their profits and had no interest in racial justice (Duarte, 2020). A company that was successful in addressing the news, due to an already established brand reputation for social justice, was Ben & Jerry's.

What's Your Flavor?

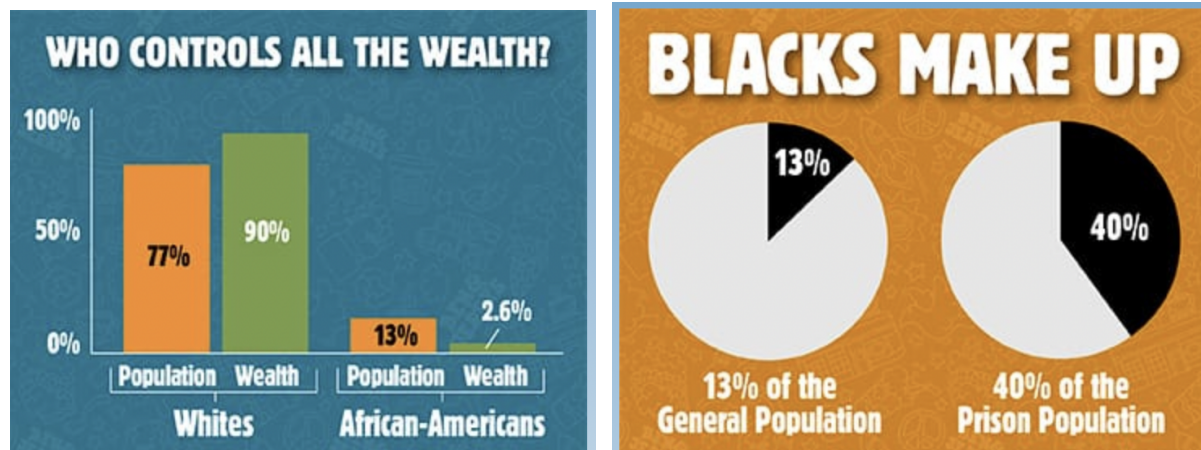


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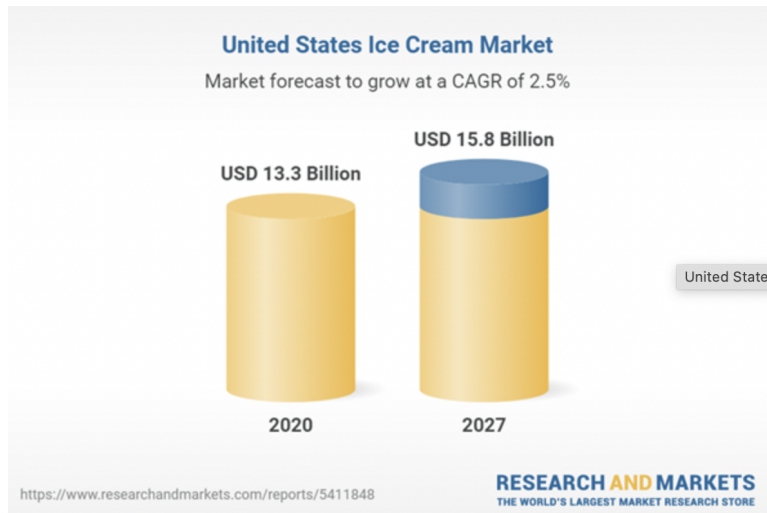
Ben & Jerry's released a statement titled "Silence is NOT an option" following a week after the murder of George Floyd. The statement reads, "The murder of George Floyd was the result of inhumane police brutality that is perpetuated by a culture of white supremacy. What happened to George Floyd was not the result of a bad apple; it was the predictable consequence of a racist and prejudiced system and culture that has treated Black bodies as the enemy from the beginning, (Ben & Jerry's 2020)." In 2016, Ben & Jerry's expressed solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in a blog post which vowed to not "be silent on violence," (Adams, 2021). Ben & Jerry's was praised by the public for having a statement that differed from other companies and for continuing the promises they had made four years prior. The statement garnered support from the public and advocacy groups but not from the far-right community, calling it "#cancelculture" (Ricci, 2021). According to Christopher Miller, head of global strategy at Ben & Jerry's, the company received "thousands and thousands" of phone calls and emails, being accused of being anti-law enforcement and promoting looting and rioting," (Beard, 2021). The company taking a stance on Black Lives Matter has been one of their most

controversial social justice campaigns. As a result, the company has had to deal with two boycotts in 2016 and 2021, by the Blue Lives Matter movement.

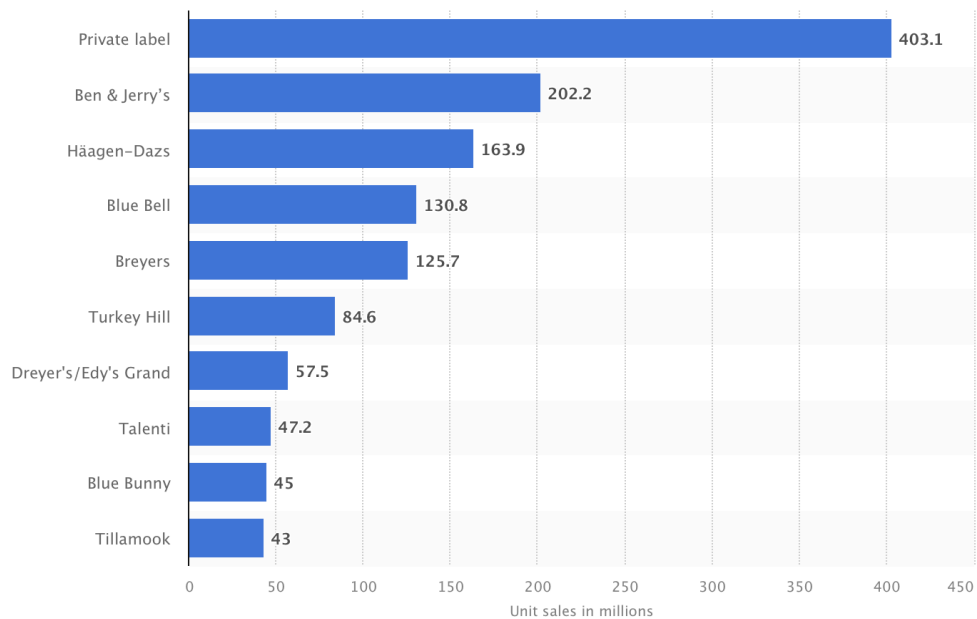
In 2016, Ben & Jerry's showed their support for the Black Lives Matter movement with a blog post titled "Seven Ways We Know Systemic Racism Is Real." The article covered seven different ways Black people were oppressed, including wealth, employment, criminal justice, etc.



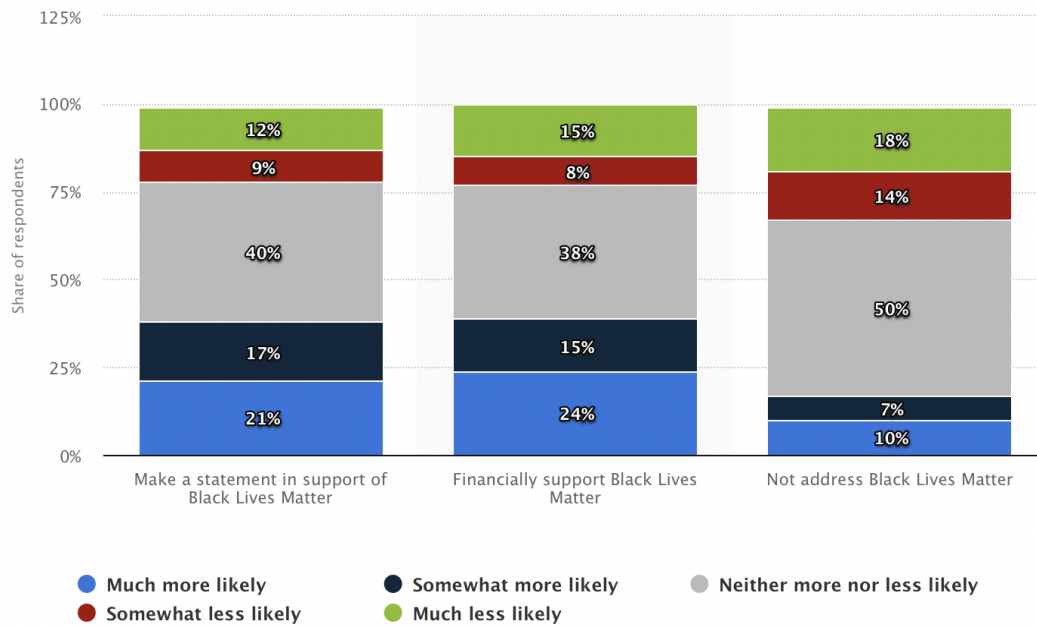
In a joint statement, titled "Why Black Lives Matter," they declared their full support for the Black Lives Matter movement, pledging to help fight for racial justice. This caused anger on social media, particularly from the far-right. The Blue Lives Matter movement is a movement that supports Law Enforcement. A statement from the movement called Ben & Jerry's a "terrorist" organization that supports "cop killers," (Chamlee, 2016). As a result, members of the Blue Lives Matter movement began a boycott. At the end of 2016, Ben & Jerry's posted their Top Blog Articles for 2016, and "Seven Ways We Know Systemic Racism Is Real" had been their most popular. These boycotts are not known to have caused a significantly negative impact on their sales, as sales have only quadrupled in the last two decades, since the acquisition by Unilever. As of 2020, the ice cream industry is a 13.3 billion dollar industry, with the expectation for it to reach 15.8 billion by 2027.



Ben & Jerry's has not experienced a decrease in sales as a result of the boycotts but their real competition has been the increase in health conscious thinking. In the last few years, there has been an insurgence of low-calorie ice cream options like Halo Top and Foxy's Thoughtful Ice Cream. There have also been more artisanal options introduced like Talenti. Ben & Jerry's has had to distinguish itself from such a wide variety of consumers. They do so by taking bold stances on public issues, which has built them a loyal fanbase. "Loyalty is pretty valuable in this business," he says. "If we share values on climate, same-sex marriage rights, racism, I think that's a deeper bond than sugar and fat," (Holman & Buckley). Ben & Jerry's founders Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, built the ice cream brand off the value in social justice. According to FlowJournal, Cohen and Greenfield "often participate in protests for the causes they believe in, using the company's social media presence to draw attention to the causes, and even integrate social justice into their products with fun names like "Pecan Resist," "Justice ReMix'd," "EMPOWERmint," and "Save our Swirled," with all the different flavors highlighting a specific cause and proceeds going to the cause, (Kunda, 2020)."



According to Christopher Miller, head of global strategy at Ben & Jerry's "After George Floyd, I think the companies and brands that tried to navigate the mushy middle — feeling the need to say something but getting concerned about upsetting folks — got the criticism and backlash. It wasn't companies like ours," (Beard, 2021). As discussed prior, Ben & Jerry's success financially, is due to a loyal fan base established throughout the last decades and has only grown in the era of Black Lives Matter, where statistics show that the public wants companies to take a stance on the Black Lives Matter movement and would be more persuaded to support a company if it did. According to Statista, as of June 2020, 24% of consumers said that they were more likely to support a company if they financially supported the Black Lives Matter movement, while 21% said they were more likely to support a company if they made a statement on the Black Lives Matter movement. 18% of consumers said that they would be less likely to support a company if they said nothing about the Black Lives Matter movement.



Following the murder of George Floyd, Ben & Jerry’s collaborated with former NFL Quarterback and current social activist Colin Kaepernick. Ben & Jerry’s first showed support for Colin Kaepernick in 2016, when Kaepernick began kneeling during the national anthem at NFL games, which ultimately blacklisted him from the NFL, including getting dropped from several endorsements and sponsorships. Their joint collaboration was a vegan ice cream called “Change the Whirled.” A portion of all sales would go to Kaepernick’s non-profit organization called Know Your Rights, a campaign that helps black and brown communities in education and self-empowerment. “Change the Whirled” became a full-time flavor nationwide at the beginning of 2021, sold in stores across the nation.

At this year's Super Bowl in Tampa, Florida, Ben & Jerry’s placed several murals and billboards of Kaepernick around the city ahead of the Super Bowl, which made headlines nationwide, especially given the history Kaepernick had with the NFL. In the press release, Chris Miller, Head of Global Activism, shared “As we look back, it’s clear that Colin was on the

right side of history. His pre-game protests were *before* George Floyd’s murder; *before* the 2020 summer of racial reckoning. He knew a long time ago that we need to address the root causes of racism and the structures of our society that are so brutal to Black people. We wanted to be part of the effort to honor Colin’s courage and legacy because we share the same values.” As part of their Change the Whirled campaign and the organizations focus on community engagement, the company also hosted a drive-thru at the mural, where they provided free meals to families, gift certificates for local businesses, and Change the Whirled ice cream. Ben & Jerry’s also donated 5000 dollars to 4 different organizations in Tampa, “for their work in the areas of power-building, educational equity, and affordable housing.” In the year since the murder of George Floyd, the brand has continued their support for the Black Lives Matter movement.



Ben & Jerry’s also released a new ice cream flavor this year named “Change is Brewing,” in support of the People’s Response act, a legislation proposed by Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo. The brand became one of 70 different organizations to voice their support for Bush and the proposed legislation. The People’s Response Act seeks to shift the responsibility of public safety to the Department of Health and Human Services, (Adams, 2021). The ice cream was announced in a press conference by Jabari Paul, the brand’s U.S activism manager. The ice cream was a collaboration with two Black-owned businesses, Blk & Bold and Greyston Bakery. The

packaging was a collaboration with female Black artist Laci Jordan. "By sending in unarmed experts to deal with health crises—and even more importantly, by providing the resources communities need to offer preventive care—the PRA will improve public safety and help prevent police violence," Ben and Jerry's said in a statement (Williams, 2021). A portion of the proceeds from the sales of "Change is Brewing" will go towards grassroots groups transforming public safety in America. According to the brand, "Change is Brewing" is part of the company's "ongoing work to advance racial justice," (Williams, 2021). The ice cream has received mixed reviews, with some far-right supporters telling the brand to "stay out of politics" on social media. The response to the ice cream overall from the press has been positive.



Since their inception, Ben & Jerry's has built a reputation of having direct honesty on their opinions on different events. Years of corporate activism has gained the company a consistently loyal fanbase. According to Christopher Miller, "I think the people who follow us on social media may do so because they connect with our values. And that's good. Many years ago, [co-founder] Ben [Cohen] had this insight that the strongest bond you can create with customers is around a shared set of values. Moving beyond that, it's just a commercial transaction. We make great ice cream. But what drives the loyalty and love for this brand are the things that we

believe,” (Beard, 2021). In order to remain informed on social issues, Ben & Jerry’s has a team consisting of a diverse group of men and women that exclusively works with advocacy.

Ben & Jerry’s advocacy team consists of 20 full-time members. The budget for the advocacy team is as large as a fifth of the marketing department’s discretionary spending, which runs into “the millions of dollars” (Holman & Buckley 2020). When coordinating their statement on the murder of George Floyd, Ben & Jerry’s consulted two advocacy groups that the company had worked with prior, Color of Change and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Both organizations work actively to end systemic racism in the United States and worldwide. Before their statement was sent for approval by the board at Ben & Jerry’s, it was sent to the NAACP and Color of Change (Holman & Buckley 2020). The established reputation that the organization has prevents it from appearing performative to consumers. The brand is the only known frozen dessert brand in the world to have strong views on topics concerning the world around us.

The brand also has a content marketing approach that differs from other brands' approach. The brand's approach is to not focus too much on market research as it can lead to “mediocrity.” According to CEO Matthew McCarthy, the brand strives to be a market disruptor, coming up with unique ice cream flavors. The product development team works with professional chefs to come up with unique new flavors. The brand will then test the flavors by sending them directly to market or by inviting small groups to try the flavor. This creates word-of-mouth leading up to the official press release for the new flavor. Although the brand is popular in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, they are still expanding to different markets, recently establishing itself in the South Korean market. According to McCarthy, he hopes other brands can become more vocal on social issues, advising other brands to not be afraid of criticism. “It is

unrealistic and unreasonable that you can put some values out there and everybody is going to agree with them and pat you on the back, (Fleming 2020).” The brand also partners with different celebrity activists, often giving a portion of the sales to the organizations these celebrities are involved with. Past partnerships have included talk-show host Stephen Colbert and actor Jesse Williams. According to McCarthy, “the key is to work closely with NGOs, they are a key part of how we do what we do. They are the experts, plus grassroots groups,” (Fleming, 2020).

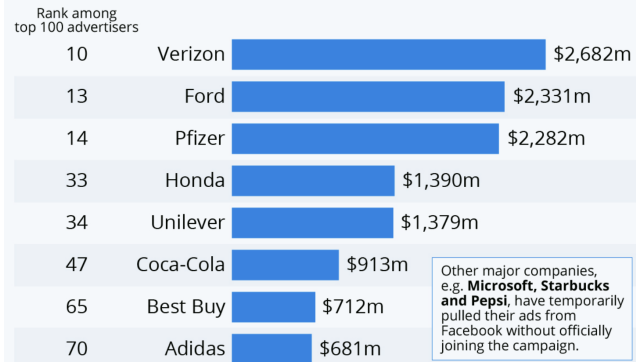
When Unilever acquired Ben & Jerry’s in 2000, the founders were reluctant to sell their company but needed to because the growth of the company had gone beyond the managerial abilities of the current board. Unilever is a consumer goods company that owns other ice cream brands like Magnum, Breyers, and Talenti. The founders only agreed to the acquisition after negotiating a deal with Unilever that would guarantee them a continuing role in the company and legally enforceable powers. Under the acquisition, Unilever became the sole shareholder of Ben & Jerry’s and it controls the company’s economic and operational decisions. Ben & Jerry’s has a separate board of directors that is not controlled by Unilever. According to Reuters, “it acts as a watchdog and has the legal authority to block proposals that lessen product quality or the social mission. As sales increase, investment in the social mission must also increase.” According to the Ben & Jerry’s website, the board of directors mission is to “preserve and expand Ben & Jerry's social mission, brand integrity and product quality, by providing social mission-mindful insight and guidance to ensure we're making the best ice cream possible in the best way possible.” That includes, but is not limited to, making sure every Ben & Jerry’s employee is making a liveable wage, and preserving the mission and values that Ben & Jerry’s was founded on. For example, since 1985, the Ben & Jerry’s foundation has funded 7.5% of its annual pre-tax

profits to organizations across the country. The board of directors also works to improve the diversity of the Ben & Jerry's workforce. According to the Ben & Jerry's website, the brand's workforce is 94% white. Part of that reason being that Vermont is one of the states with the largest population of white people. The brand has two manufacturing plants and their corporate headquarters, which is 95% white. Despite this, the brand states on their website that "through our employees, supply chain and partnerships we have a wide range of opinions, attitudes and experiences about race and religion represented."

Besides having a separate board of directors, Ben & Jerry's also collaborates with non-profit organizations for guidance. After the murder of George Floyd during an election year, Ben & Jerry's suspended all product ads on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, in support of racial justice and in protest of President Trump's claims on social media. The company was one of many that chose to support the Stop Hate for Profit campaign, an ongoing campaign that holds social media companies accountable for hate on their platforms. Ben and Jerry's was one of a thousand brands to join the campaign. The goal was to use paid media to bring attention to the election and encourage the public to register to vote, with guidelines placed by the organization, Color of Change. Ben & Jerry's announced their partnership with Color of Change in 2018, releasing a statement on their website introducing the organization and gathering signatures to get people involved in their campaign. The campaign received 48,412 signatures.

Advertising Heavyweights Join Facebook Ad Boycott

Largest advertising spenders to officially join the Stop Hate For Profit campaign (based on total U.S. ad spend in 2018)



Sources: Ad Age, Stop Hate for Profit

Another way that Ben & Jerry's communicates and releases their statements is through blog posts and website communications. Ben & Jerry's blog is updated consistently with different topics. The company releases all of their press releases on their blog, but a lot of their articles are related to world issues including climate change, racial justice, and voting rights. Ben & Jerry's uses these communication networks to inform its stakeholders on not only products but issues of interest to the company. The company's three part mission includes sharing the company's success with all stakeholders: employees, suppliers, distributors and customers.

The last way that Ben & Jerry's connects with its stakeholders is through social media. The company is active on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. They currently have 1.6 million followers on Instagram, 523.8 thousand on Twitter, and over 8.6 million people follow their Facebook page. Ben & Jerry's social media strategy is no different than how they approach the rest of the company, by focusing on values. On social media, the brand posts links to their blog. The brand also highlights organizations that they partner with and use their platform to educate their audience on different issues. The brand also uses their partnerships to coordinate campaigns. The brand uses their platform to highlight an issue with educational resources, links,

and ways to donate. According to Christopher Miller, the brand is successful with bringing awareness because they have access to a platform with a variety of people that non-profit organizations would typically not have access to. The brand's social media strategy includes working closely with outside partners and allies. According to Miller, “We take our lead from the people who are on the front lines of these issues [who] have been historically marginalized, [who] live and breathe these issues. People have to understand our history and how it created the future that we’re living today,”(Shi, 2021). Co-founders Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield remain active on social media as well, constantly speaking out on events happening around the world. It is the established reputation the brand has that helps them to be successful on social media.

In conclusion, Ben & Jerry’s has built a reputation for being a corporation that values social justice, by showing their support for causes like LGBTQ+ rights, Climate Change, and in the past few years, the Black Lives Matter movement. In 2016, Ben & Jerry’s first announced their support for the Black Lives Matter movement with a blog post on their website called “Seven Ways We Know Systemic Racism Is Real.” The statement offered seven explanations to prove systemic racism is present in our society. It covered the discrepancies amongst races in housing, education, wealth, etc. Ben & Jerry’s also released a joint statement titled “Why Black Lives Matter.” The statement received massive backlash from the Blue Lives Matter movement, which accused Ben & Jerry’s of supporting a “terrorist organization that kills cops.” The Blue Lives Matter movement released a counter statement that circulated on Facebook 30,000 times. Law enforcement supporters and far-right individuals quickly boycotted the brand but Ben & Jerry’s remained firm on their stance and continued to collaborate with advocates for racial justice.

A few months after the murder of George Floyd, the brand collaborated with Former NFL Quarterback Colin Kaepernick on an ice cream flavor called “Change the Whirled.” A portion of the proceeds would go to Kaepernick’s Know Your Rights campaign. A year later, the brand continued their support for racial justice by announcing a new ice cream flavor called “Change is Brewing!” in support of the People’s Response Act, proposed by Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo. The ice cream and packaging was a collaboration with Black-owned businesses Blk & Bold and Greyston Bakery and Black artist Laci Jordan. The ice cream was made in a limited batch, sold nationwide across stores, with a portion of the proceeds going to grassroots organizations working in public safety.

By taking an objectively clear stance on the case involving George Floyd, the brand continued to build a loyal fanbase. The brand’s campaign further proved to be a success with the announcement of two new flavors in collaboration with social rights activists, Colin Kaepernick and Cori Bush. “Change the Whirled!” has gone on to become a full-time flavor available in most stores nationwide. “Change is Brewing!” was released in not only the United States, but parts of the United Kingdom, Germany and other parts of Europe. Ben & Jerry’s shows a deep commitment to their value of social justice through collaboration with advocacy groups like Color For Change and the NAACP. The company has their own advocacy team that receives proper funding and keeps the company consistently updated on social justice issues. The brand has built a loyal fanbase throughout its history and that is why it remains the most popular ice cream brand in the nation each year and one of the most popular ones in the world.

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