Today, brands must always be aware of social issues. That’s because social media and other online platforms move at an incredible velocity. The cost of ignorance is swift and severe. Negative brand adjacency damages not just a brand’s reputation but can impact its bottom line as well.

**Key Discoveries**

The ARF’s Knowledge Center recently investigated the risk to brands. Turns out several studies shed light on this issue. A 2017 Wharton School and Omnicom study surveyed 1,500 North American Millennials and Gen Xers ages 22-45. Their findings?

- 64% said a brand would hurt its reputation if it was placed near hateful, derogatory or offensive content
- 70% said they wouldn’t recommend or purchase anything from a brand near such content

A 2017 CMO Council Survey of 2,000 North American and UK consumers found similar results. One important discovery was that consumers are gravitating toward news and media outlets they find trustworthy and away from social media platforms, which they distrust. Other findings:

- 48% would abandon a brand they loved, if its ad ran next to objectionable content
- 88% would reconsider purchasing from a brand whose ad ran next to objectionable content
- 63% said they’d respond positively to an ad run on a trusted media channel
- 60% said they are purposely consuming content from trusted media channels, to escape objectionable content

A 2018 study by Israeli cybersecurity firm CHEQ, Magna & IPG Media Lab and BMW, set to quantify unsafe ad exposure on consumer brand perceptions. If an ad was placed next to unsafe content, consumers:

- Were 2.8X less willing to associate with the brand
- Purchase intent decreased 2X
- Were 3X more likely to feel the brand was not “in the know”
- Were 4.5X more likely to feel the brand did not care about them

When unsafe content directly clashed with the brand or vertical, consumers’ brand quality perception decreased 7X. They were also 50 percent less likely to recommend the brand. The limitations of the study were that it only tested two verticals - Hulu and BMW. Although these findings are significant, more research is required to flesh out these perceptions and trends.