

Entry 6893

Entry Name:	Black Community PMP
Advertiser/Brand	U by Kotex
Category	Multicultural

Strategy**Strategy (20 percent):**

Seventy-three percent of Americans support the Black Lives Matter movement. Yet stories about the BLM movement, the murder of George Floyd, and the everyday experiences of Black people are regularly (even if unintentionally) being censored in the media.

How? Advertisers use keyword exclusion lists to ensure that their brands don't appear alongside content that doesn't align with their values, or show up alongside stories where an ad may seem out of place. But this has unintentionally led to a lack of financial support for hard news and critical stories, despite high reader interest. The problem goes beyond news and critical stories as well, it affects lifestyle, fashion content, and more. A major legacy publisher for the community confided that words like "dope" or "bomb", everyday jargon in Black culture referring to anything from being happy with a hairstyle or outfit, are often flagged as stories about drugs or violence – leading to servers blocking advertisements on that page/publisher. Some sources estimate that U.S. publishers lost a total of \$2.8 billion in revenue in 2019, due to incorrect blocking of safe content. And in recent months, several publishers and technology companies have publicly shared how keywords around Black lives are disproportionately being affected—all of which leads to demonetization, and then censorship, of Black voices.

Research showed people want brands to take action to support black lives matter movement and DEI efforts, not just talking the talk, but are walking the walk to take action. U by Kotex (feminine hygiene product brand) understands everyone is different. It is committed to respecting and understanding what women go through with their period. To drive intentional investment and support the Black community through journalism, content creators and the arts, the solution was to create a specifically designed Black Community Private Marketplace (PMP).

A study from CHEQ and the University of Baltimore found that online journalism, in 2019, lost \$2.8 billion in revenue. We found that 67% of Americans agree that brands have an important role to play to speak out against racial inequality and injustice and 65% of Americans agree that they're more likely to support brands who take meaningful action around racial inequality and Black Lives Matter rather than making posts and statements. That stat rises to 71% for multicultural Americans.

According to Nielsen in 2018, Black consumers also commanded roughly \$1.3 trillion in annual buying power, but long-time publications in the community were shutting their doors and/ or filing bankruptcy due to lack of funding. Ad Age released & a top verification partner confirmed that content with words like 'black people' were being flagged as non-brand safe – thereby defunding spaces that these topics were important to. Therefore, Black publishers had to decide between covering topics important to the community or being censored and funded.

U by Kotex recognised a way to drive intentional investment and support the Black community, through journalism, content creators and the arts, through a bespoke private marketing place – a Black Community private marketplace (PMP).

This is a campaign about elevating black voices, and drive media dollars to digital platforms and publications in the Black community that were disappearing, due to lack of funding.

Today's advertisers have hundreds to over a thousand words on keyword exclusion lists. These lists tell automated digital advertising models not to put a brand's advertising alongside content that could be potentially non-brand safe, based on specific words or phrases. But in an effort to avoid their brand appearing alongside topics or content that could be potentially inflammatory, stories of hard news and underrepresented voices wind up unintentionally flagged and demonetized, despite consumer interest. Words like "dope" or "bomb" can be flagged as stories about drugs or violence, but they're everyday jargon in Black culture.

While there has been progress made in this area around semantic keyword processing, there's still much to do – and thus exclusion lists are often unintentionally blocking content that some brands would like to support. In turn, this moves money away from publishers that need it, and has created a form of digital censorship in which ad dollars dictate what we do and don't read.

U by Kotex is a brand that stands for championing progress. "We know first-hand what the difference between being an ally and an advocate can do," says Brian Clayton, General Manager for U by Kotex North America.

The goal was to raise awareness, divert media dollars to support the black community in a meaningful way. U by Kotex knows that you can't fight against racism and structural inequality if Black voices are being silenced, and we're proud to invest in Black journalists, content creators, and artists.

Algorithm bias is pervasive but has an especially detrimental effect in advertising. Pretty much every facet of our lives is controlled by algorithms; from what content we see, to the prices we pay, to traffic lights, to search engines, to voice assistants, to who gets a loan, to who we decide to date, to who gets the job.

Here's an example, dating back to the early 20th century. We'll start in perhaps the most humble of places: the library. Yes, a library. For as modest and simple as libraries are, it holds a historical place in algorithmic bias history. Howard University librarian Dorothy Porter had just acquired poetry books from poets such as James Weldon Johnson. She was told to file the new books using the Dewey Decimal System, the number-based classification system libraries have used for over 150 years to sort books. According to the Dewey Decimal System, her new poetry books perplexingly belonged in section 325, the section for colonization. They didn't belong in section 811, where other poets like Charles Dickens lived. The only difference between Johnson's book on the left and Dickens' on the right was the color of the author's skin.

Fast forward to now, and this is essentially still what's happening now with our content and advertising.

According to Pew, Black Americans are far more likely than other racial groups to feel that they are misunderstood by the media industry and news organizations. And following the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests, this became even clearer, as numerous publishers and tech companies came forward to share how keywords around Black lives were being disproportionately blocked, leading to demonetization and censorship of Black voices. U by Kotex, feminine hygiene brand, promises to avoid category stereotypes and anything else that the category considers standard if that doesn't reflect the reality of your life. It also believes nothing should stand in the way of women achieving their dreams, especially not having access to period products. But how can a brand authentically be an ally and take action, if black women are disenfranchised? And if algorithm bias and key word exclusion lists were unintentionally siphoning money away from marginalized publishers, due to the inability to read a keyword within context?

Execution (20 percent):

We can't discuss inclusivity without understanding and acknowledging that the Black Community is uniquely diverse; Black people are not a monolith and the community is no longer willing to solely identify as the Advertising industry once labeled them: African Americans. This initiative is original because it curates and reaches voices across the Black Diaspora: descendants of West & Central Africa taken to various places in the Americas – meaning we're reaching first generation African, Afro-LatinX, Caribbean American audiences and more. Though Americans in the Black Diaspora share the 'Black experience', culturally, there are nuances that are important to each group. Whether it's tapping into an Afro-beats or Reggae playlist, or serving the ad on LatinX endemic sites like Mitu, U by Kotex wanted to truly be inclusive to the Black community.

Not only is this a programmatic marketplace that focuses on supporting journalists and publishers who are catering to, and writing stories for, the Black community, but it includes ways to directly support Black content creators and artists across the Black Diaspora. Strategically, the PMP features everything from partners such as Pod Digital (the first Black-owned and curated podcast network) to a deal with Zefr that brings in over 150+ Black YouTube creators, such as Jackie Aina (who advocates for people of color in the cosmetics industry) and Chescaleigh (activist and comedian). The offering is managed in-house with U by Kotex's dedicated hands on keyboard programmatic trading team. The marketplace is a curated programmatic marketplace comprised of over 25+ digital media publications that are Black-first, Black-owned, or Black-centered, as well as partners who had a history of positively telling Black stories or who can financially uplift Black creators/artists. The inventory suite is comprehensive, with Digital Display, Audio, Podcasts, Programmatic Sponsorship Opportunities, FEP and Video across the U.S. available. All deals were negotiated on a 1:1 basis and unlike typical programmatic deals, these were negotiated with a 75% or better viewability goal. Though no keyword exclusion or inclusion lists are applied, DoubleVerify monitoring is appended to the campaign setup – ensuring that clients have brand safe scale within the programmatic environment in the Trade desk OR DV360. The campaign also negotiated an added value measurement study with Lucid to track brand awareness, consideration, favorability and attribute.

This activation was web-based mobile. We looked to launch this experience via banners to achieve maximum scale among a highly targeted audience. Leveraging web-based mobile also provided consumers with a more seamless visibility of our message to support the Black community. Unlike other traditional channels, consumers were able to engage with the content.

Business Impact (40 percent):

Today it's more important than ever to have minority voices represented in the press. 59% of Americans think news organizations do not understand people like them. But when you break it down by Black, Hispanic, and white Americans—Black Americans are far more likely than the other two groups to feel that misunderstanding is based on their race or another demographic trait. (Pew Research).

In addition to the U.S., a similar PMP to support the Black Community will soon launch in the U.K. as part of a wider global initiative. This second "Inclusion PMP" also comes on the heels of, and works in tandem with, numerous other initiatives designed to support underrepresented voices and promote the diversity and health of the media marketplace.

At campaign launch, it was clear that this would be special! The Black Community PMP drove a 900x improvement (no, not a typo!) on clickthrough rates and a 1.34x improvement on video completion rates for U by Kotex—both versus previous benchmarks.

Though the campaign is still live, with a brand study gauging impact on brand favorability and awareness, but campaign to-date results show a 3.7x higher CTR, 25% greater video completion rate (VCR) and 2x the viewability when comparing it to the standard open market U by Kotex programmatic campaigns.

Brand awareness increased by 6%, brand consideration by 3.2% and we saw a 5% lift in brand favorability, thus far.

"U by Kotex is a brand that stands for championing progress and we know first-hand what the difference between being an ally and an advocate can do," says Brian Clayton, General Manager for U by Kotex North America. "Our goal with being a launch partner for this PMP is to create real action and support for Black voices and communities, and this is a concrete way to do that. You can't fight against racism and structural inequality if Black voices are being silenced, and we're proud to invest in Black journalists, content creators, and artists."

Creative

1) https://s3.amazonaws.com/mindshare-live/assets/uploads/casestudy/image1/mindsharesblackcommunitypmp-47300/UBK_Creative_Mocks.jpg