NEWSWHIP

THE BIGGEST REPUTATION ISSUES IMPACTING BRANDS IN 2024



THE BIGGEST REPUTATION ISSUES IMPACTING BRANDS IN 2024

In 2024, brands are facing myriad issues that affect their public perception. The decisions brands make regarding these issues are closely watched, and can often bring about unfavorable reactions.

This report broadly looks at four specific crisis types that brands have faced in the first half of 2024, namely food inflation, artificial intelligence and hacks, product-related reputational issues, and lawsuits.

Certain issues, such as food inflation, have been a topic of discussion for years as consumers continue to grapple with increased costs. The difference in 2024 is that more brands have been dragged into those conversations, with some even receiving critcism as a result of their CEO's actions, including the likes of Kellogg's and Chipotle.

Concerns over the use of artificial intelligence have also been heightened in recent months as tech brands release new products and attempt to integrate AI into more workflows. Exampled from this year that we looked at include OpenAI, Microsoft, and Netflix.

We've also seen several brand reputation issues that have a had a long-term effect. Boeing is the most obvious example of this, with ongoing conversations significantly damaging the company's reputation, but the likes of Target have also seen examples of this.

Finally, lawsuits have been a major source of crisis for brands, specifically in Q2 of this year. The mere fact of one existing can be potentially damaging to a brand's reputation, and we looked at some of the most prominent ones to be brought forward, from the likes of Ticketmaster & Live Nation, to Netflix and Sheetz.

Let's begin with food inflation.

49K

Articles written about Boeing safety issues

285.1K

Engagements with articles about Five Guys' prices

What you will learn in this report

- Which brands are being talked about alongside food inflation
- The effect of some long-term reputational issues
- How lawsuits can impact a brand's reputation

Issue Analysis

FOOD INFLATION



FIVE GUYS

Five Guys made headlines earlier this year as one of the first food brands to face criticism over its pricing.

There was a surge in media coverage during the first week of March after a picture of a $24 receipt went viral on X. The receipt, posted by Wall Street Silver, quickly sent social media users into a frenzy over how expensive it's become to eat at the fast-food chain.

The initial post on X received over 82k engagements on its own, but the flood of articles that were published in the following days collected another 285k. Several of the top articles came from local news outlets around the country, with Fox 4 Dallas having the most engaged overall.

TOP ARTICLES ABOUT FIVE GUYS' PRICES

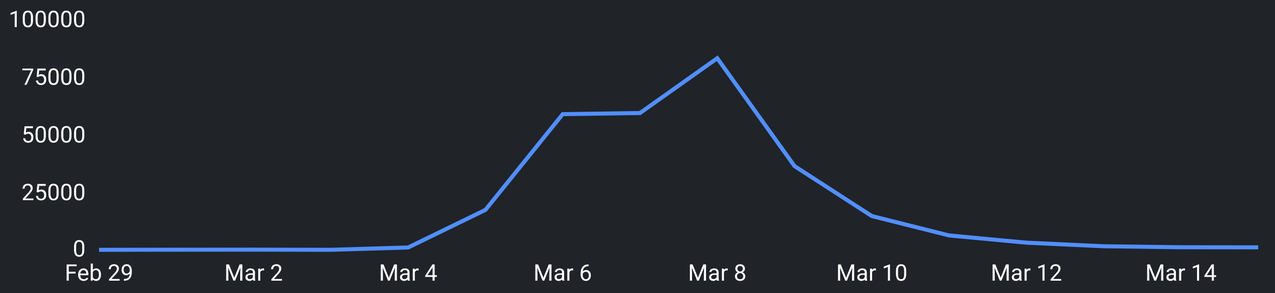
Publisher	Headline	Engagements
fox4news.com	Five Guys' prices sparks outrage after $24 receipt goes viral: 'Highway robbery'	44,250
today.com	Five Guys customers say its prices are 'out of control'	38,655
nbclosangeles.com	Five Guys customers say its prices are 'out of control'	18,826
entrepreneur.com	Five Guys Slammed for High Prices, Receipt Goes Viral | Entrepreneur	12,919
nbcwashington.com	Five Guys customers say its prices are 'out of control'	8,308

PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN FIVE GUYS' PRICES

285.1k Interactions on articles | **399** Articles published

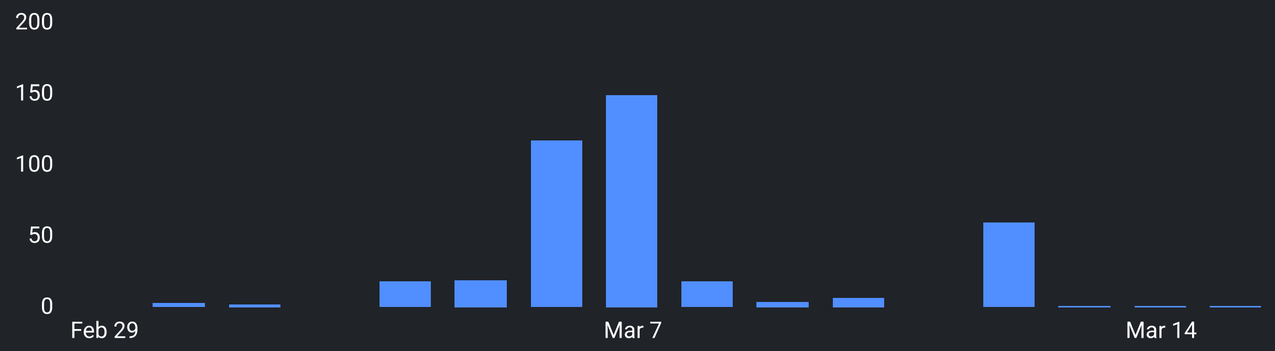
Public Interest

Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest

Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, Feb. 29, 2024 – March 15, 2024 only

KELLOGG'S

Kellogg's also captured attention around the same time as Five Guys, but it was comments from the company's CEO that landed the brand in the hot seat.

In an interview with CNBC, Kellogg's CEO Gary Pilnick said the company was advertising cereal for dinner as a more affordable option for consumers. His comments were quickly met with backlash, especially on social media, with TikTok and Instagram posts seeing tens of thousands of engagements.

There were hundreds of articles written about Pilnick as well, which received 64k engagements and highlighted the ongoing consumer anger at companies raising prices on everyday foods.

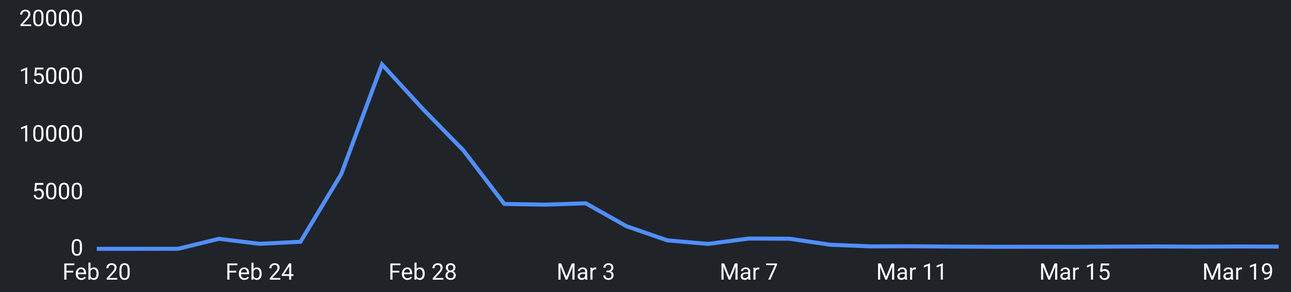
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT KELLOGG'S CEO

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
abc12.com	Kellogg's CEO faces backlash over cereal for dinner campaign	**4,816**
theguardian.com	Let them eat Flakes: Kellogg's CEO says poor families should consider 'cereal for dinner'	**3,351**
comicsands.com	Kellogg's CEO Slammed For Encouraging Struggling Families To Just Eat Cereal For Dinner	**3,127**
cnn.com	Kellogg's CEO: Let them eat Corn Flakes for dinner | CNN Business	**2,798**
nypost.com	Kellogg's CEO faces backlash after suggesting people should eat cereal for dinner to save money	**2,672**

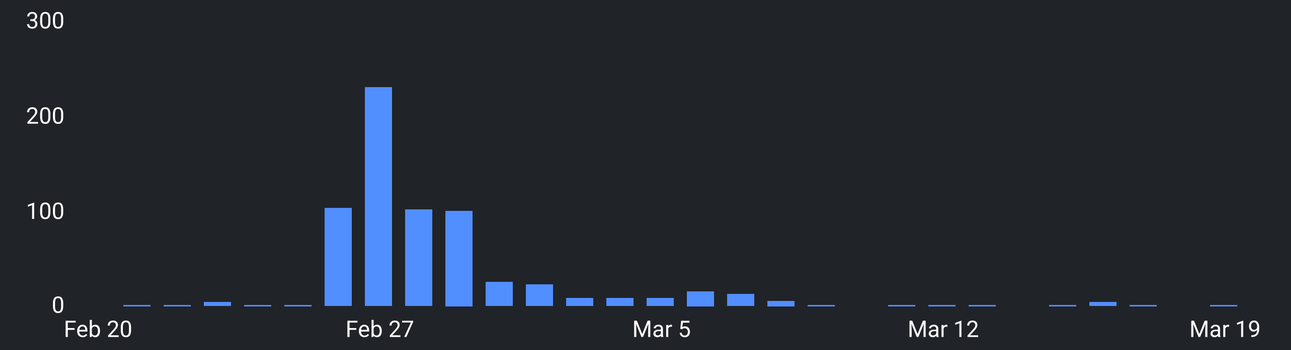
PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN KELLOGG'S CEO

64.4k Interactions on articles | **667** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, February 20, 2024 – March 20, 2024 only

CHIPOTLE

Chipotle's portion sizes have been a topic of interest on the internet this summer, and a recent video from its CEO has propelled it even further.

TikTok users have long been complaining that the bang they get for their buck at Chipotle has decreased, and it reached a point where CEO Brian Niccol was asked about portion sizes by the likes of CNBC 's Jim Cramer. His comments made their way onto TIkTok via Fortune magazine.

Fortune's video has since accumulated over 1 million engagements. Compare that to the 35 articles written about Niccol's comments, and it's clear to see where this resonated, with articles not making much impact.

TikTok is where the conversation was happening, and it's where the CEO's response generated heat, and those two things aren't a coincidence.

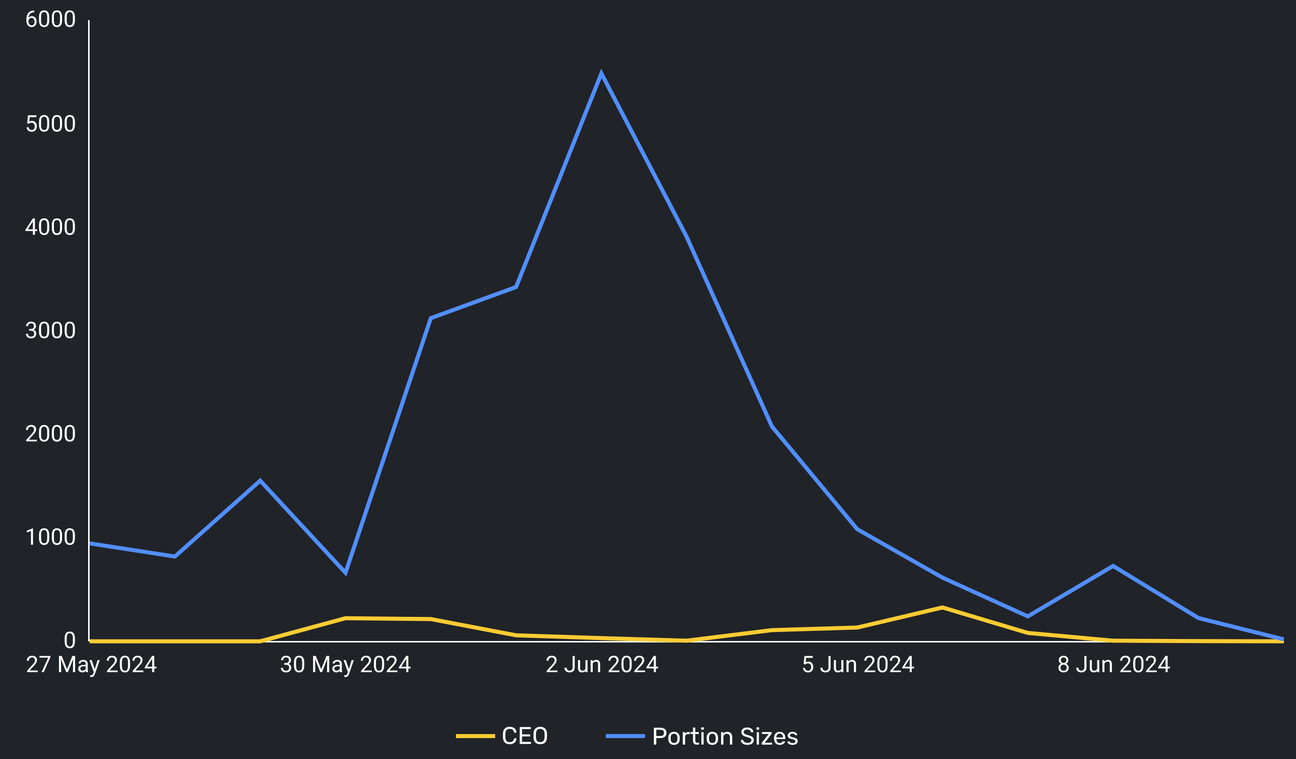
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT PORTION SIZES

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
wgntv.com	Are portions getting smaller at Chipotle? Company responds to viral claims	2,363
cbsnews.com	Chipotle insists its portions haven't shrunk, after TikTokers claim they did	1,702
fox10phoenix.com	Chipotle customers claim filming gets bigger portions amid portion size controversy	1,045
fox9.com	Chipotle customers claim filming gets bigger portions amid portion size controversy	1,042
today.com	Chipotle says its portion sizes haven't changed, despite complaints on TikTok	1,016

PUBLIC INTEREST IN CHIPOTLE CEO AND PORTION SIZES

1.2k CEO | **29.2k** Portion Sizes

Public Interest Social media interactions on articles



*Source NewsWhip Spike, May 23, 2024 – June 7, 2024 only

IN-N-OUT

In-N-Out raised prices of some menu items after California's new minimum wage law went into effect.

In-N-Out made headlines along with several other fast-food chains for increasing prices to deal with the new $20 wage. This was first revealed by a New York Post investigation, with several conservative publishers then picking up the story.

The real driver of engagement for In-N-Out, however, was an interview with the company's president, Lynsi Snyder, who said she fought to keep prices down. In the end, the brand raised the price of their burger by just 25 cents, but the decision still received significant attention.

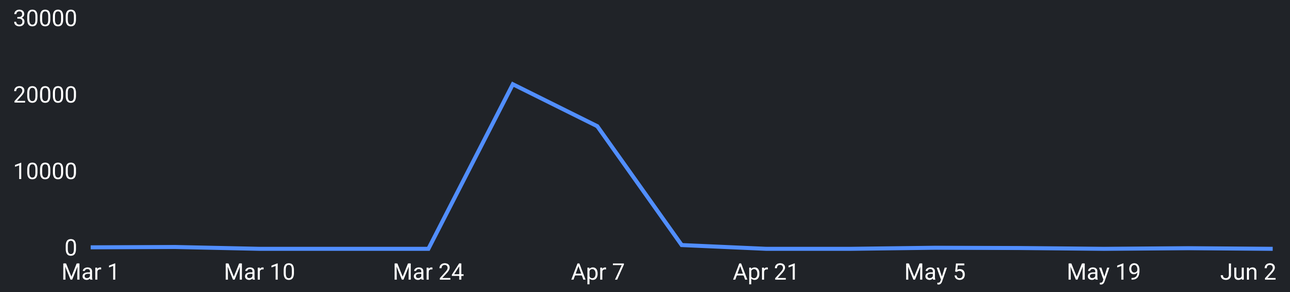
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT IN-N-OUT PRICES

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
nypost.com	Billionaire In-N-Out heiress Lynsi Snyder claims she went 'toe-to-toe' to keep prices down as Calif. fast food industry, prices slammed by minimum…	13,442
foxla.com	Burger King, In-N-Out and other chain locations in California raise prices after minimum wage increase: report	10,588
westernjournal.com	Popular Chain Mod Pizza Forced to Close 5 Locations After California's $20 Minimum Wage Kicks In	7,089
westernjournal.com	Burger King, In-N-Out, and Others Raise Prices Significantly 2 Days After California's $20 Minimum Wage Kicks In	1,407
foxbusiness.com	Burger King, In-N-Out and other chain locations in California raise prices after minimum wage increase: report	1,224

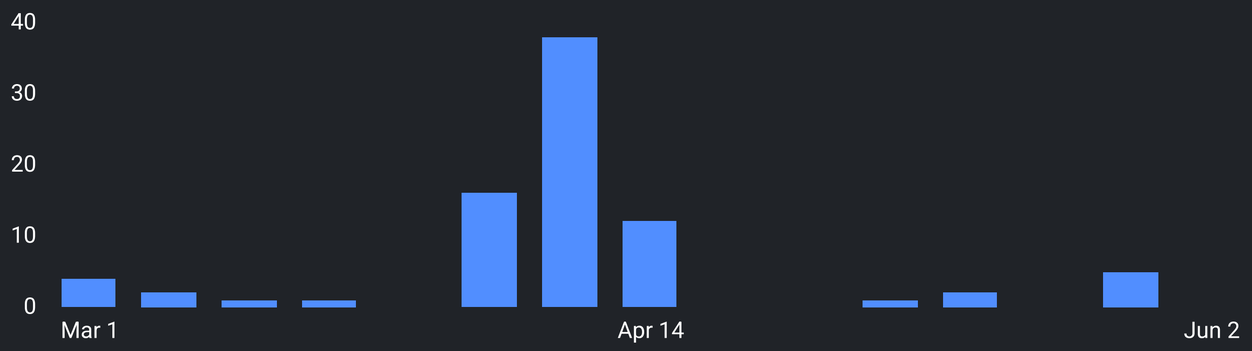
PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN IN-N-OUT PRICES

38.8k Interactions on articles | **82** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



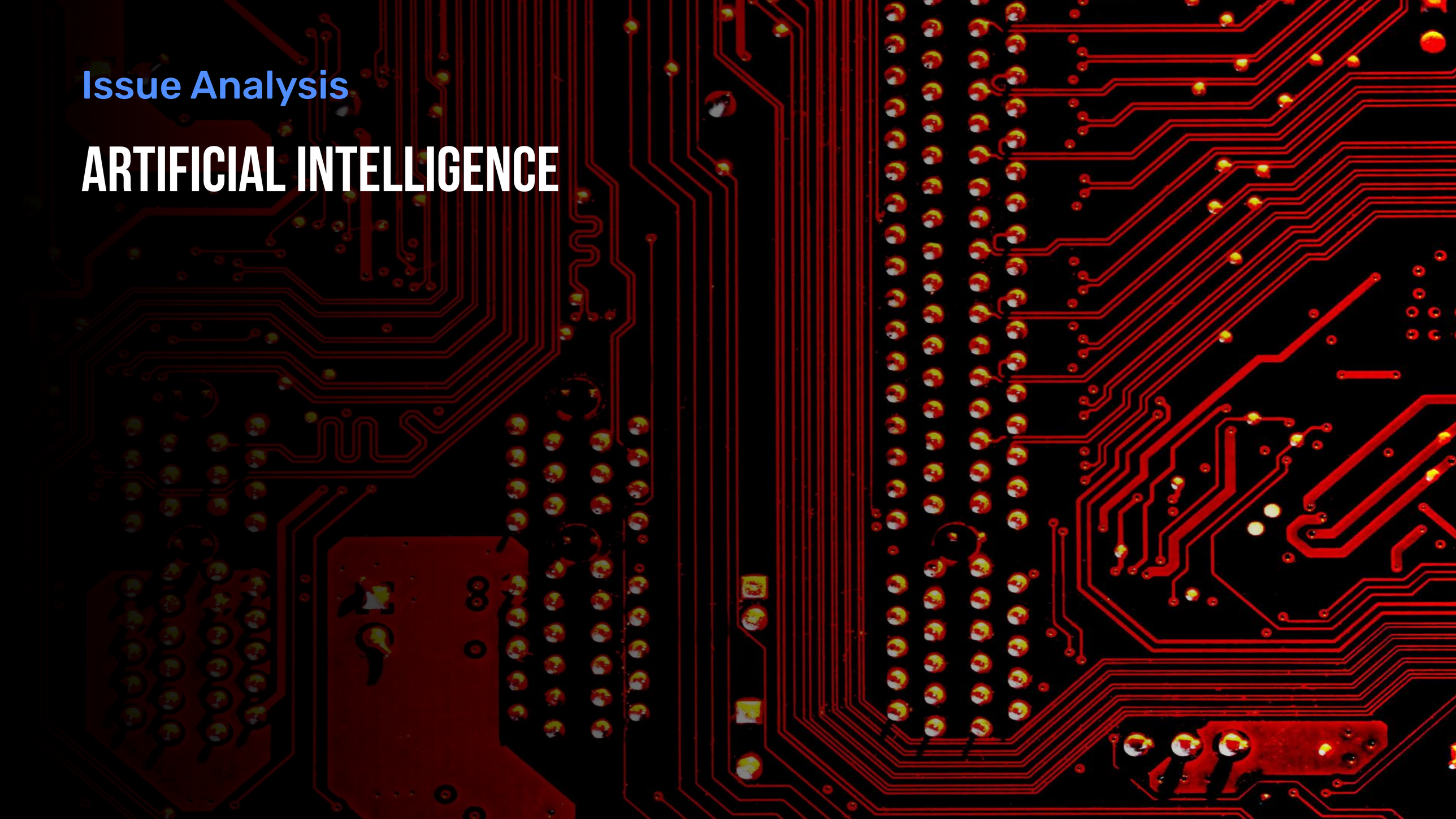
Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, March 1, 2024 – June 2, 2024 only

Issue Analysis

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



OPENAI

OpenAI and its CEO, Sam Altman, have faced criticism over the last month for accusations surrounding its latest release of GPT-4o.

The new improved voice capabilities for the GPT-4o model included a voice option that immediately sparked comparisons to the movie “Her”, in which Scarlett Johansson voices an AI chatbot. Johansson hired legal counsel as a result of OpenAI’s actions after previously declining Altman’s offer to voice the technology.

This caused an uptick in media and public interest the week after the new model was released, and OpenAI has since paused the controversial voice option in its products.

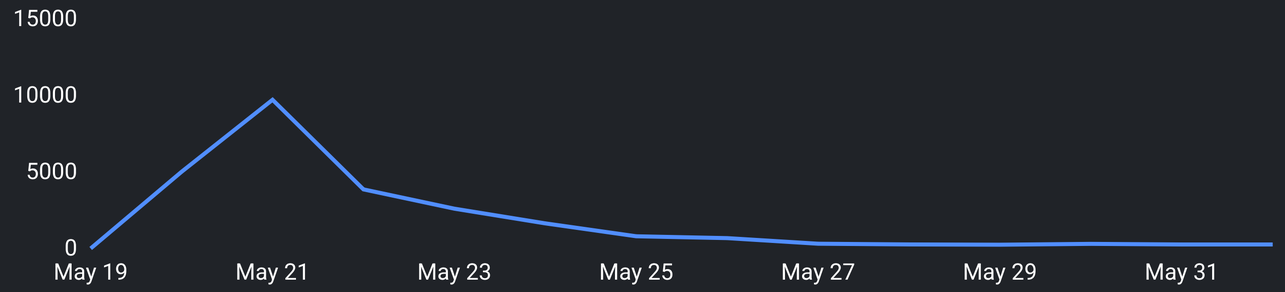
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT OPEN AI & SCARLETT JOHANSSON

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
nytimes.com	Scarlett Johansson Said No, but OpenAI’s Virtual Assistant Sounds Just Like Her	2,932
washingtonpost.com	Scarlett Johansson says OpenAI copied ‘Her’ voice after she said no	1,810
fortune.com	OpenAI’s week of chaos has reopened a festering wound at the $80 billion startup that was supposed to have healed	1,413
wheresyoured.at	Sam Altman Is Full Of Shit	1,181
futurism.com	Sam Altman Ignoring Scarlett Johansson's Lack of Consent Shows Us Exactly What Type of Person He Really Is	937

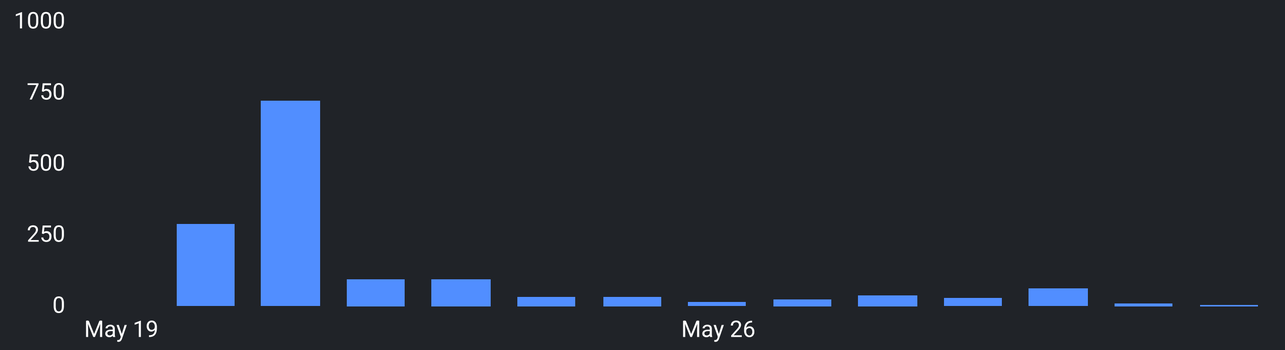
PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTERST IN OPEN AI & SCARLETT JOHANSSON

26.2k Interactions on articles | **1.4k** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, May 19, 2024 – June 7, 2024 only

MICROSOFT VULNERABLE TO HACKS

Microsoft's new Recall feature caused alarm among the cybersecurity commnunity for being easily hackable.

The new feature, which functions as an AI-enabled photographic memory, regularly takes screenshots and stores them to be recovered later. Wired reported that security researchers discovered that the screenshots are stored in an unencrypted database, making them easily accessible to hackers.

After a week of mounting critcism circulating online, Microsoft announced on June 7th that it would be making Recall an opt-in feature, meaning it would be turned off by default for all users.

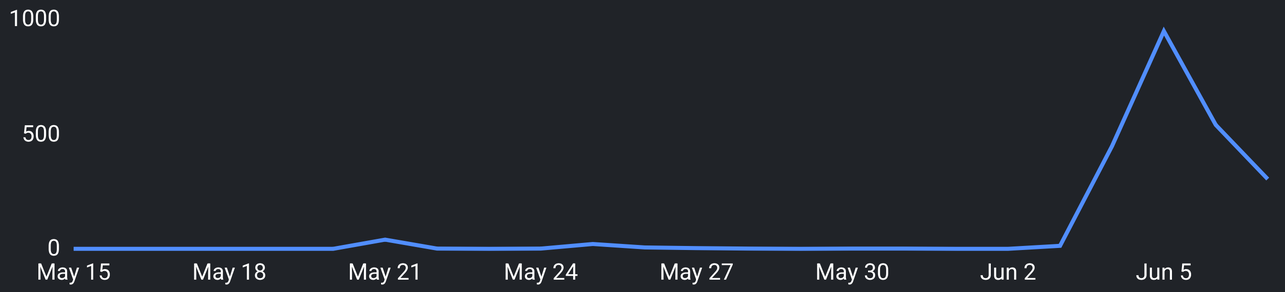
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT MICROSOFT HACK

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
wired.com	This Hacker Tool Extracts All the Data Collected by Windows' New Recall AI	2,176
wired.com	Microsoft's Recall Feature Is Even More Hackable Than You Thought	379
thehackernews.com	Microsoft Revamps Controversial AI-Powered Recall Feature Amid Privacy Concerns	165
futurism.com	Windows Feature That Records Everything You Do Can Easily Be Hacked	96
wired.com	Microsoft's New Recall AI Tool May Be a 'Privacy Nightmare'	34

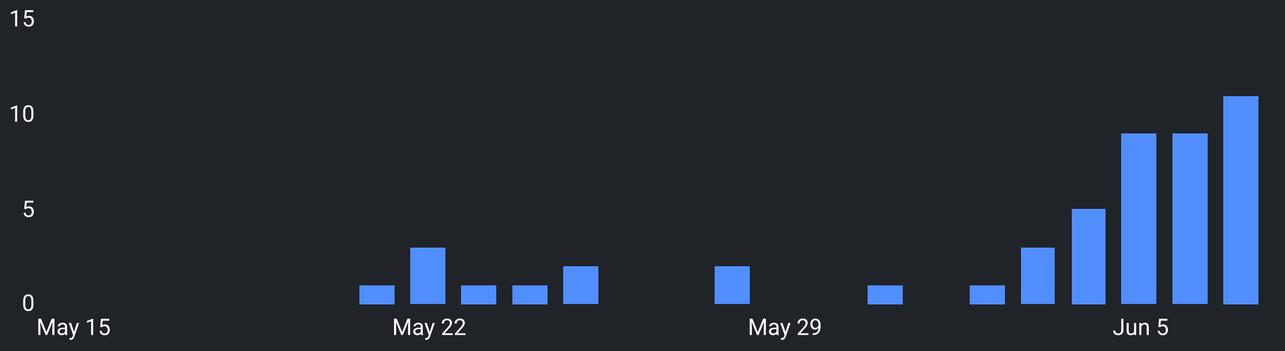
PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN MICROSOFT HACK

2.3k Interactions on articles | **49** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, May 15, 2024 – June 7, 2024 only

NETFLIX IMAGE CONTROVERSY

AI-generated images have now made their way into documentaries, marking another controversy around the use of AI in creative work.

In true crime documentary “What Jennifer Did”, Netflix was accused of artificially generating the images of Jennifer Pan, or at least manipulating them.

The issue here was that AI was used and not disclosed anywhere in the films credits. Although Netflix did not comment on the accusations and this seems to be a minor offense, if using AI-generated images this way becomes more common, it could result in a more significant public reaction.

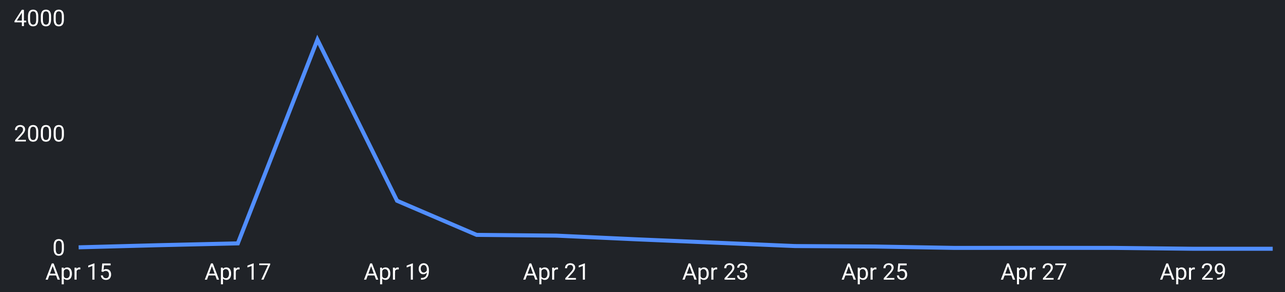
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT NETFLIX AI IMAGES

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
404media.co	Netflix Doc ‘What Jennifer Did’ Uses AI Images to Create False Historical Record	4,004
breitbart.com	Netflix Accused of Using AI Image in True Crime Documentary	221
avclub.com	Netflix and A24 both land in hot water over apparent AI stuff	147
philstarlife.com	Netflix true crime documentary 'What Jennifer Did' accused of using AI-manipulated photos	105
independent.co.uk	What Jennifer Did embroils Netflix in alleged AI scandal	93

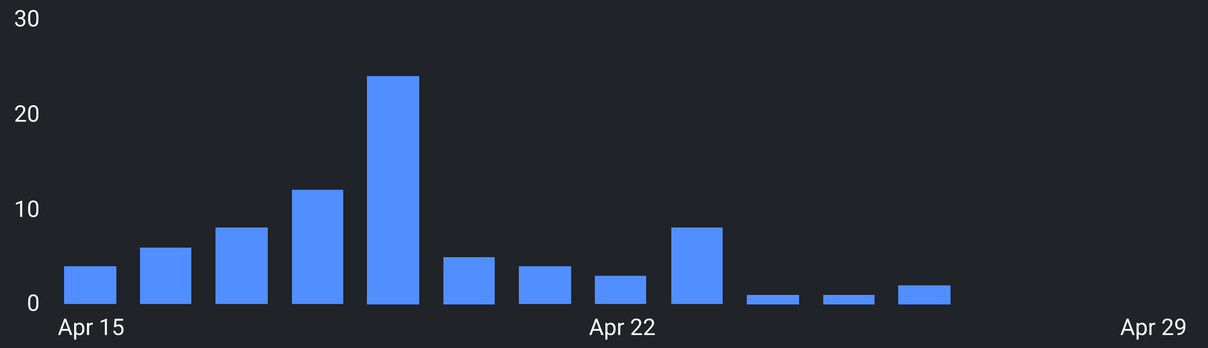
PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN NETFLIX AI IMAGES

5.6k Interactions on articles | **78** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, April 15, 2024 – April 30, 2024 only

Issue Analysis

PRODUCTS



TARGET & PRIDE

Target was one of the companies that got caught in the post-Bud Light fallout last year, as many influential conservatives threatened to boycott the staff.

Preempting any such backlash this year, Target has elected to dial back on its Pride merchandise, offering it online and in ‘select stores’ according to reporting.

While this has resulted in some push-back of its own as people criticize the move, the company is drawing a lot less attention than it did last year, as is made clear from the graph opposite. The articles below show the top reporting from the brand’s decision to limit availability of Pride merchandise this year.

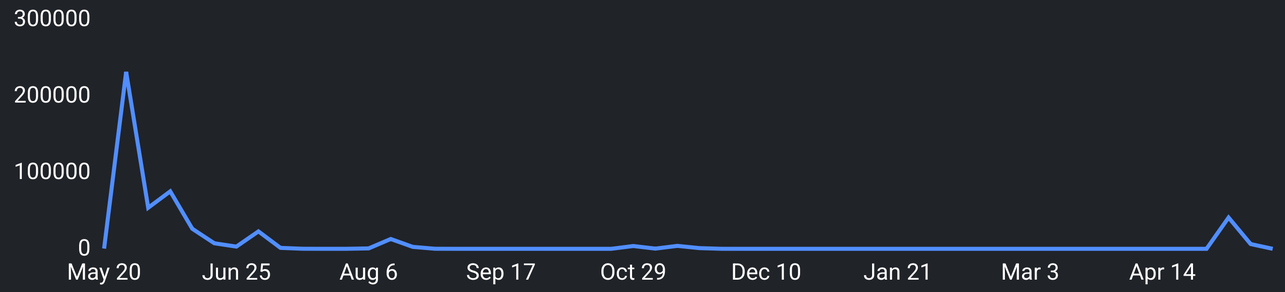
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT TARGET & PRIDE IN 2024

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
cnn.com	Target is dialing back on Pride merchandise after right-wing backlash | CNN Business	2,431
thehill.com	Target selling Pride Month merchandise online and in ‘select stores’ after pushback	2,021
westernjournal.com	Target Preemptively Pulls the Reins on 'Pride Month' in Wake of Last Year's Backlash	2,003
midmichigannow.com	Target scales back in-store Pride collection, shifts focus to online sales after backlash	1,889
fox17.com	Target scales back in-store Pride collection, shifts focus to online sales after backlash	1,687

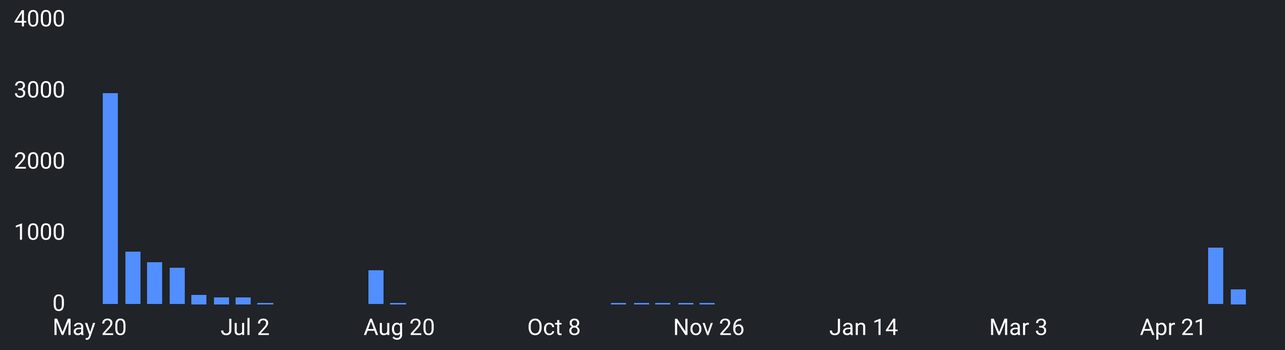
12-MONTH VIEW OF TARGET PRIDE COVERAGE

492.8k Interactions on articles | **6.8k** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, May 20, 2023 – May 19, 2024 only

BOEING SAFETY ISSUES

Boeing has been through the ringer this year. After several high-profile issues, coverage of the company's safety problems has increased dramatically.

The new 12-month Historical Analysis feature in NewsWhip Spike shows just how big of an issue this has become. There was a massive spike in coverage and public interest after an Alaska Airlines plane was forced to make an emergency landing following structural damage in January.

This has led to persistent coverage in the subsequent weeks and months that simply have not gone away for the embattled airplane manufacturer. There were more than 1,000 articles a week about its planes' safety still being published in June, more than five months after the original incident.

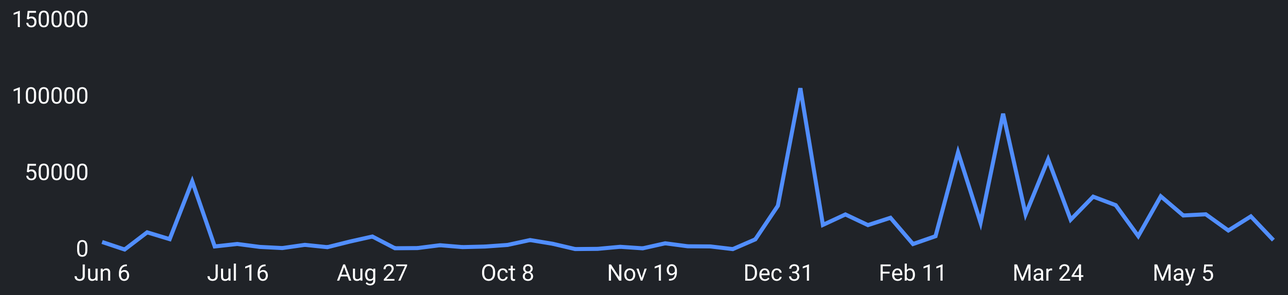
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT BOEING SAFETY ISSUES

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
babylonbee.com	Boeing CEO Assures Nervous Fliers That All 737 Aircraft Are Built To The Highest Diversity Standards	32,957
babylonbee.com	Retired Angel Hernandez Gets New Job Inspecting Planes For Boeing	11,896
boston25news.com	Justice Department says Boeing violated deal that avoided prosecution after 737 Max crashes	8,345
nytimes.com	Boeing C.E.O. to Step Down in Major Reshuffle at Embattled Plane Maker	7,319
wsbtv.com	Justice Department says Boeing violated deal that avoided prosecution after 737 Max crashes	6,776

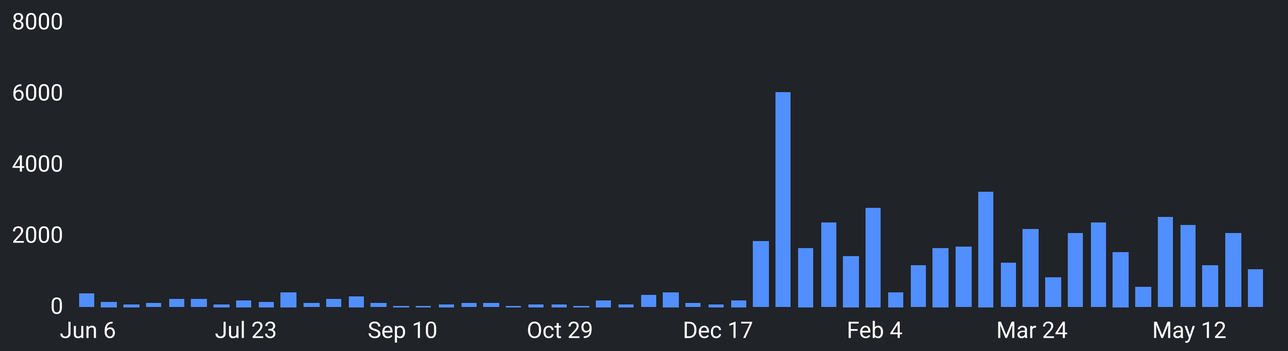
12-MONTH VIEW OF BOEING SAFETY ISSUES

829.9k Interactions on articles | **49k** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, June 8, 2023 – June 7, 2024 only

HERTZ EV SALES

Rental car company Hertz has seen some business issues stem from their decision to purchase a lot of electric vehicles, and has made the decision to move back to gas-powered vehicles since.

This became a big narrative on Fox News and some conservative-leaning media in January when the decision was announced, with Fox's main coverage alone garnering sixty thousand engagements. Its local affiliate stations had tens of thousands of engagements combined in addition.

The narrative went on to become a long-term issue as the CEO stepped down in March and the company announced it would sell more cars in April before more sales in June.

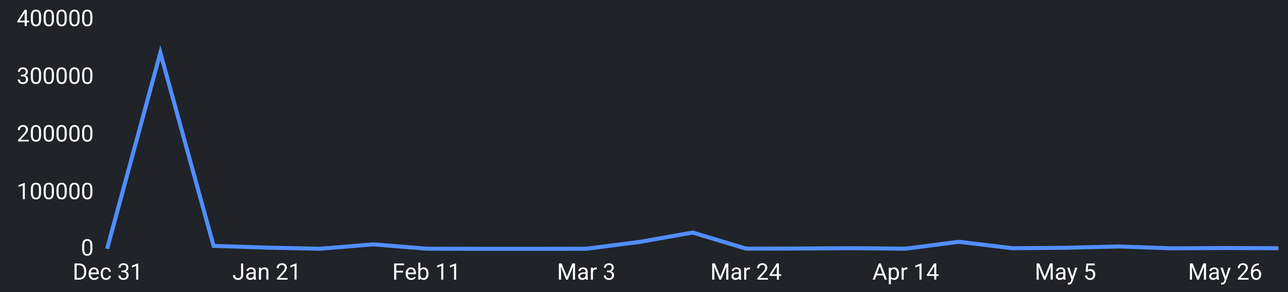
TOP ARTICLES: HERTZ SELLING EV FLEET

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
fox6now.com	Hertz selling 20,000 EVs from rental fleet; will reinvest in gas-powered vehicles	68,327
ktvu.com	Hertz selling 20,000 EVs from rental fleet; will reinvest in gas-powered vehicles	20,180
westernjournal.com	Hertz Selling Fleet of EVs, Shifting Back to Gas Cars	11,146
nytimes.com	Hertz Will Shrink Electric Fleet After Being Burned by Tesla's Price Cuts	10,446
fox10phoenix.com	Hertz selling 20,000 EVs from rental fleet; will reinvest in gas-powered vehicles	8,038

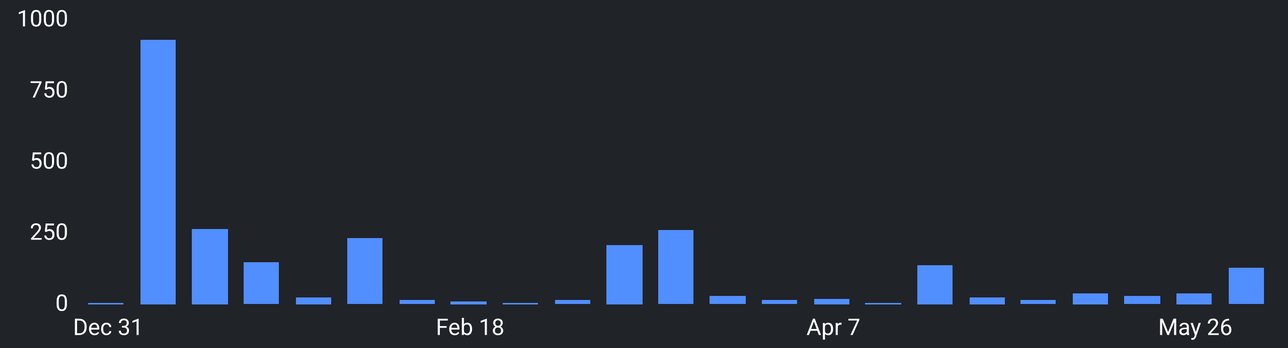
PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN HERTZ ELECTRIC VEHICLES SALES

422.4k Interactions on articles | **2.6k** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, Jan 1, 2024 – Jun 7, 2024 only

NIKE'S ENGLAND SHIRT CONTROVERSY

While not as long-lasting an issue compared to the other three in this section, it's worth shining a light on how politics can also affect and amplify product perception.

At the end of March, Nike unveiled an England soccer jersey with a redesigned flag, which differs from the traditional St. George's cross by adding more colors.

Many observers were up in arms about this, and politicians weighed in criticizing Nike, resulting in thousands of articles and tens of thousands of engagements. Nike, however, stuck to their design and did not change it, despite the critiques, and the controversy soon died down.

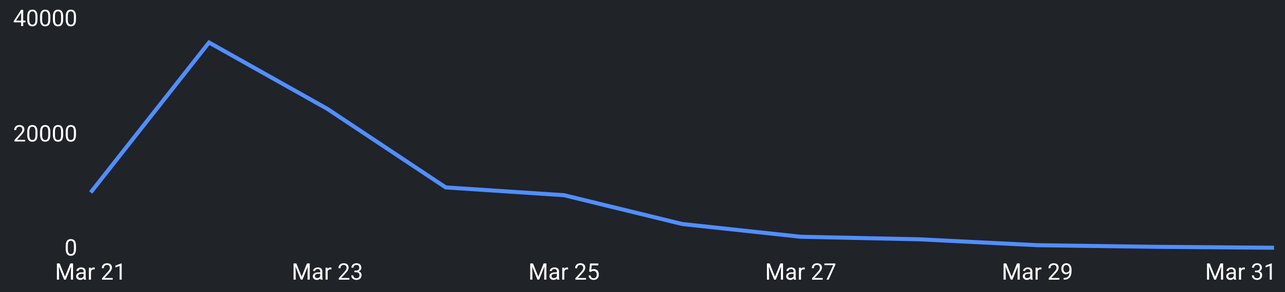
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT NIKE'S ENGLAND SHIRT

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
dailymail.co.uk	FA executive who approved changes England's kit left Wembley LAST YEAR	10,708
dailymail.co.uk	England star Harvey Elliott hides 'rainbow coloured' St George's flag	4,690
bbc.co.uk	Starmer urges Nike to change new England kit cross - BBC News	3,926
lbc.co.uk	'How dare you change our flag!': Football fans left furious after Nike 'updates' cross colours on new England kit	3,854
talk.tv	Keir Stamer urges Nike to change the colour of St George's Cross on England football kit back to traditional red | TalkTV	3,600

PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN THE NIKE ENGLAND SHIRT

99.5k Interactions on articles | **2.9k** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, March 21, 2024 – March 31, 2024 only

Issue Analysis

LAWSUITS AGAINST BRANDS



LAWSUITS

Lawsuits obviously have a tangible business impact, with either fines or recognition of wrongdoing potentially damaging to a brand's bottom line. However, beyond that, they can also have a reputational impact.

Even if a lawsuit doesn't result in a negative decision for a brand, the mere fact of one existing can be enough to damage the reputation. We've seen lawsuits like the Subway tuna and bread processes spark interest in the past, and Q2 was a quarter when a number of prominent lawsuits have been brought forward.

These included the DOJ starting processes against Ticketmaster and Live Nation over a potential monopoly, Netflix being sued by someone that inspired a character in Baby Reindeer, and Sheetz was sued over discriminatory hiring practices.

On the surface, these are all quite different, but all received significant coverage and interest from the public. Let's dive into the data.



TICKETMASTER & LIVE NATION

The DOJ announced in November 2022 that it would be carrying out an antitrust investigation in Ticketmaster's parent company Live Nation.

This followed some high-profile controversy over Taylor Swift ticket sales. While the two were not related, it did cause heightened interest in the Justice Department's investigation.

In May of this year, that investigation reached its next step, as the government sues Live Nation and asks a court to break up what Attorney General Merrick Garland says is "monopolistic control over the live events industry at the cost of fans, artists, smaller promoters, and venue operators."

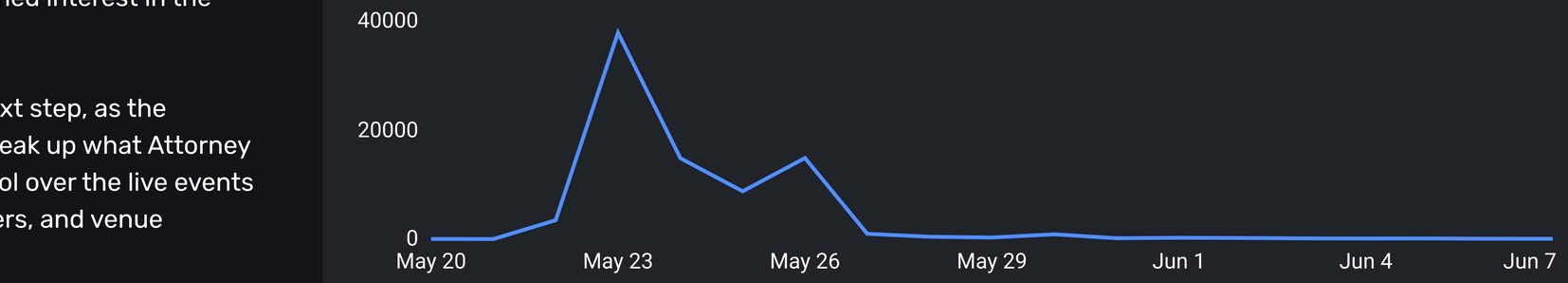
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT DOJ'S TICKETMASTER LAWSUIT

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
wsoctv.com	NC, SC join lawsuit to break up Live Nation and Ticketmaster	9,045
boston25news.com	Government sues Ticketmaster owner and asks court to break up company's monopoly on live events	7,713
apnews.com	Government sues Ticketmaster owner and asks court to break up company's monopoly on live events	5,402
cnn.com	US sues to break up Ticketmaster and Live Nation in a groundbreaking monopoly lawsuit | CNN Business	2,706
nytimes.com	U.S. Calls for Breakup of Ticketmaster Owner	2,422

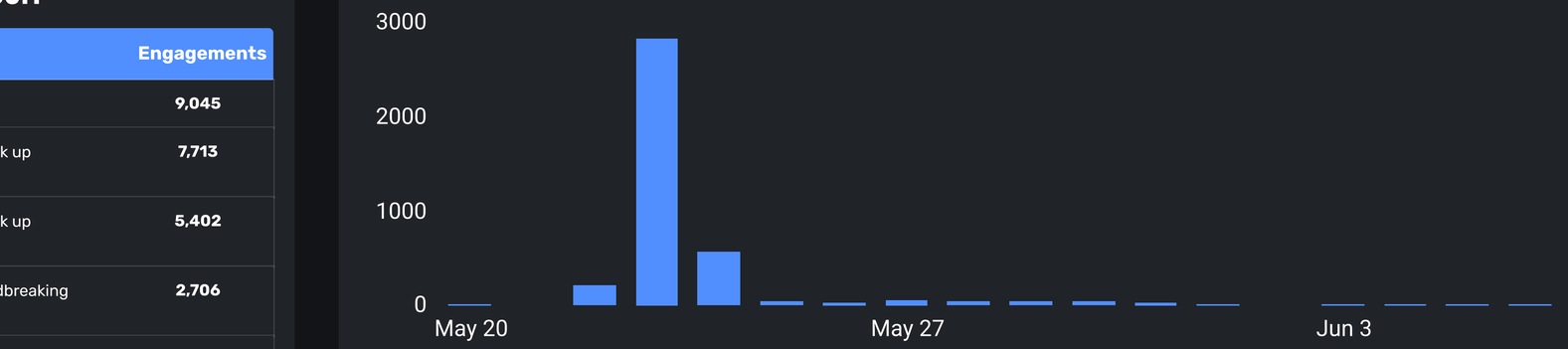
PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN TICKETMASTER LAWSUIT

83.7k Interactions on articles | **4k** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, May 20, 2024 – June 7, 2024 only

SHEETZ LAWSUIT

Sheetz has also faced a lawsuit from a federal agency, but this time it's the lawsuit itself that has caused most of the controversy.

The EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) lawsuit claims that "Sheetz's hiring practices disproportionately screened out Black, Native American/Alaska Native, and multiracial applicants."

While the case is still ongoing at time of publication, the narrative actually shifted and became about the timing, as it happened to be the day after a campaign stop from Biden that saw some social media coverage of the president go viral in some circles.

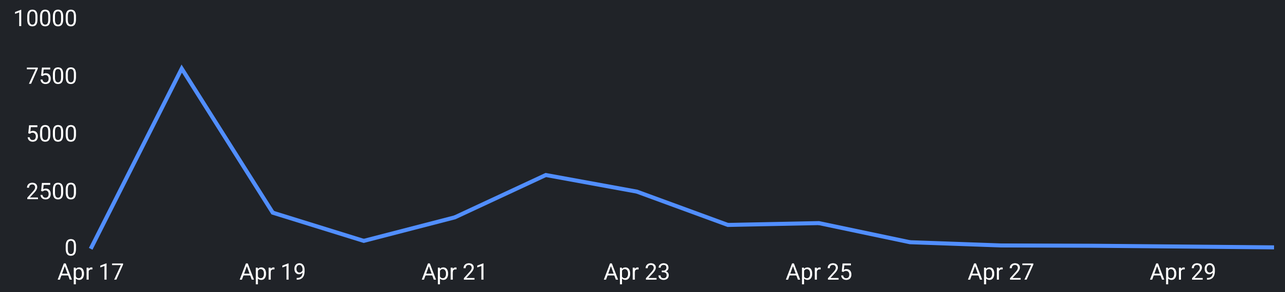
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT SHEETZ LAWSUIT

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
wpxi.com	Lawsuit claims Sheetz denied employment to class of job applicants because of their race	7,273
thegatewaypundit.com	Biden Regime Sues Sheetz Convenience Stores for Discrimination ONE DAY After Old Joe's Embarrassing Botched Photo Op at a Sheetz Gas Station	1,562
foxbusiness.com	Biden admin hits Sheetz convenience store chain with lawsuit, despite campaign stop	1,204
westernjournal.com	Biden Files Lawsuit Against Gas Station Chain Sheetz the Same Day He Was Mocked for Shuffling Into It	1,083
apnews.com	Convenience store chain with hundreds of outlets in 6 states hit with discrimination lawsuit	781

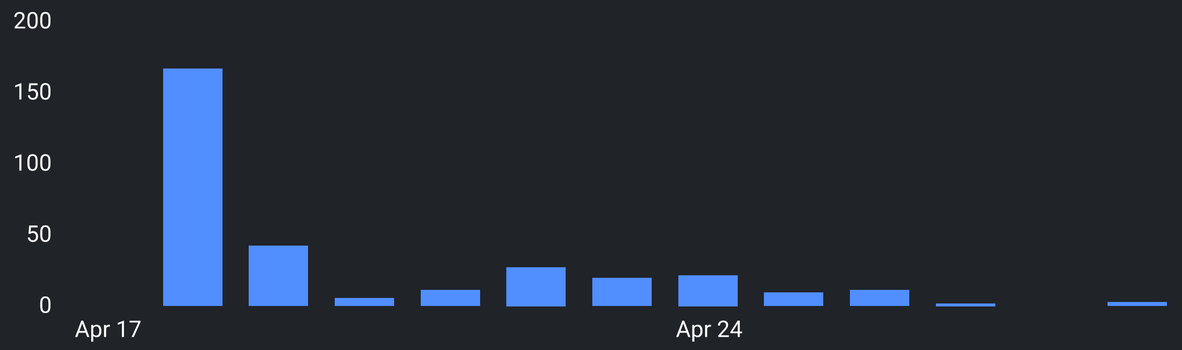
PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN THE SHEETZ LAWSUIT

19.8k Interactions on articles | **320** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike, April 17, 2024 – April 30, 2024 only

NETFLIX & BABY REINDEER

The most recent example of a brand being hit with a lawsuit sees Netflix feature in our coverage for the second time.

On this occasion, it's because of Baby Reindeer, a show created by comedian Richard Gadd, about his experience with a stalker — known in the show as Martha.

Now Fiona Harvey, upon whom the character is reportedly based, is suing the entertainment giant for nine-figure sum.

This shows the two sides of a show receiving critical and public acclaim, as public attention can very quickly shift from positive to negative if it's not managed carefully.

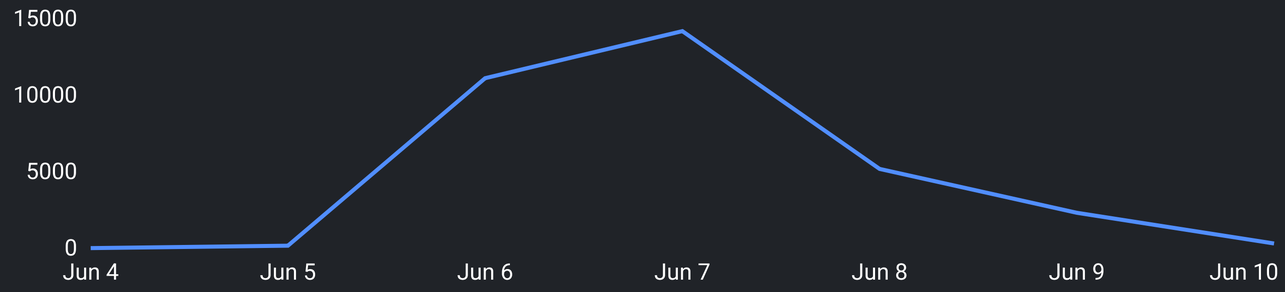
TOP ARTICLES ABOUT THE NETFLIX BABY REINDEER LAWSUIT

Publisher	Headline	Engagements
metro.co.uk	Richard Gadd carries the world on his shoulders as 'real Martha' sues Netflix	2,003
metro.co.uk	Baby Reindeer's 'real Martha' suing Netflix for '£132,000,000 in damages'	1,742
news.abs-cbn.com	'Baby Reindeer' inspiration sues Netflix for $170 million	1,606
foxnews.com	'Baby Reindeer' alleged inspiration sues Netflix for $170M	1,104
tmz.com	Real-Life Martha from 'Baby Reindeer' Sues Netflix for Defamation, Wants Over $50M	1,071

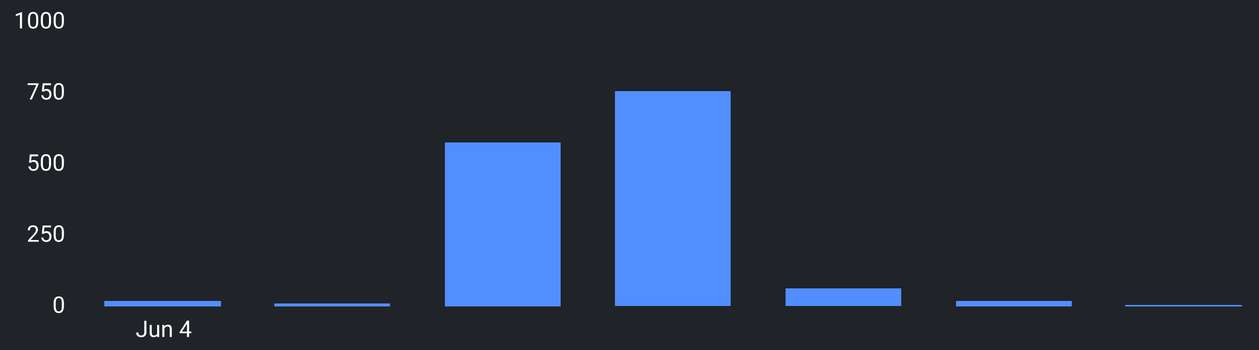
PUBLIC AND MEDIA INTEREST IN THE NETFLIX BABY REINDEER LAWSUIT

33.6k Interactions on articles | **1.4k** Articles published

Public Interest
Social media interactions on articles



Media Interest
Number of articles published



*Source NewsWhip Spike June 5, 2024 — June 10, 2024 only

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Food inflation, artificial intelligence, product-related reputation issues, and lawsuits have been some of the most detrimental issues to impact brands in 2024.

Although rising food prices are not unique to 2024, there is growing public interest in how they are handled, and with what executives at major food brands have to say regarding the issue.

Concerns over the future of artificial intelligence are not going anywhere, whether they are voiced from the general public or from within the industry itself.

Several brands have faced reputation issues due to their products. This is shown in Target's decision to limit Pride merchandise, and in Boeing's ongoing safety issues that have resulted in months of coverage.

Lawsuits have the power to make a reputational impact on brands. In some cases the lawsuits themselves can drive attention, and in others the lawsuit can be amplified by other controversial issues surrounding the brand, such as what happened with Ticketmaster and Taylor Swift.

TikTok continues to be a major platform for brand criticism to spread, and in many cases, like with Chipotle, it's the principle driver of those conversations.



THANK YOU!

