# Artificial intelligence misuse and Elon Musk top reputational risk concerns, study finds



A recent study conducted by the Global Risk Advisory Council has identified artificial intelligence misuse and an association with Tesla CEO Elon Musk as two of the most significant current threats to brand reputation. The findings stem from a survey involving 117 international public affairs leaders hailing from 17 countries and spanning 58 different industries. The data collected was used to formulate a 'reputational risk index', ranking these concerns at the top.

Elon Musk’s name occupies second place in this index, reflecting the impact of being either aligned with him or targeted by him. Isabel Guzman, chair of the Global Risk Advisory Council, attributed this to Musk’s “controversial omnipresence in the media landscape.” She explained, “The impact of association with influential figures in today’s heavily divided environment cannot be understated, especially with a deeply polarizing leader like Elon Musk.”

The challenges Musk’s presence poses have already become apparent, particularly for his own companies. Tesla, for example, has experienced a decline in sales, notably in countries where Musk has voiced opinions on domestic political matters. This downturn has led Tesla to implement incentives and promotional efforts, including pitches to the White House, in an attempt to bolster sales amidst ongoing issues such as the Cybertruck’s design challenges.

Other brands have taken steps to distance themselves from Musk or his activities. A recent example includes the producers of Blade Runner 2049 suing Tesla over the use of an AI-generated image resembling elements from the film.

More broadly, the misuse of artificial intelligence is seen as an even greater hazard to brand reputation. The report points to instances such as the Coca-Cola Christmas advertisement, which faced public backlash due to its reliance on AI image generators. The broader risks the report highlights include generating deepfakes, spreading misinformation, biased decision-making, and unethical applications that could manipulate public perception or cause harm.

One member of the council noted: “AI, if not understood or managed in companies, can have an incredible trickle-down effect that may not be reversible.” Another expert suggested that brands need to establish clear AI policies, treating them with the same level of importance as other core operational areas.

Brett Bruen, from the PR firm Global Situation Room, which commissioned the survey, described the reputational risk index as an “unambiguous warning” to CEOs and brand leaders. He stated: “If you squander stakeholder and consumer goodwill on these issues, it won’t be coming back anytime soon.”

These insights come as companies continue to navigate the evolving landscape of artificial intelligence and public perception of high-profile figures, underscoring the complex challenges brands face in maintaining their reputations in a rapidly changing media environment.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.globalsitroom.com/reputational-risk-index> - This URL corroborates the existence of the Global Risk Advisory Council and its composition of over 100 public affairs leaders from 17 countries and 58 industries, as well as the creation of the Reputational Risk Index reflecting top reputational threats, including AI misuse and Elon Musk's impact on brand reputation.
* <https://www.euronews.com/business/2025/04/16/elon-musk-associated-and-ai-top-list-of-biggest-business-risks-report-finds> - This article confirms that the Reputation Risk Index ranks Elon Musk’s association and artificial intelligence misuse as top reputational risks, highlighting the polarizing effect of Musk and the reputational dangers of AI-related issues such as deepfakes and misinformation.
* [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60b54d990f183412ca1b7428/t/67fe7d658c410469f8518ea5/1744731496676/RRI+Brief-FINAL.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60b54d990f183412ca1b7428/t/67fe7d658c410469f8518ea5/1744731496676/RRI%2BBrief-FINAL.pdf) - This PDF report from the Global Risk Advisory Council details the risks of AI misuse to brands and discusses real-world repercussions for companies like Tesla linked with Elon Musk, supporting claims about AI's reputational impact and Tesla’s sales challenges.
* <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/01/28/tesla-sales-decline-linked-to-elon-musks-political-comments.html> - This CNBC article reports on Tesla's sales decline in regions where Elon Musk has made political statements, confirming the article's assertion of Musk's controversial presence negatively affecting Tesla's market performance.
* <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr-esq/blade-runner-2049-producers-sue-tesla-over-ai-image-1235283129/> - This Hollywood Reporter story covers the recent lawsuit by Blade Runner 2049 producers against Tesla over the unauthorized use of an AI-generated image resembling elements from the film, supporting the article's claim of brands distancing themselves from Musk-related AI controversies.