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Lululemon founder's views test the brand



Katarina Lukač
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Lululemon founder Chip Wilson's remarks on women's hiring and "importing brides" have prompted questions from consumers of the Canadian sportswear brand, whose biggest EMEA store is in London. Wilson, who has been at odds with his former company, no longer holds a management role, but remains its largest individual shareholder and owns almost a fifth of Finnish group Amer Sports, owner of Salomon and Atomic. On LinkedIn, members are asking how Lululemon keeps such views from influencing its culture, urging consumers to be more conscious of "where we're directing our money". Some say they're "very unlikely" to buy its leggings again, while others are expressing sympathy for the company's comms and social teams.

EDITORS' PICKS



Nicole Jasmine Scott
8h

It’s Black Friday. Or Black Week. Or Black Month. Who even knows anymore?

Anyway, I HATE wearing my winter coat.

It doesn’t look great or have a hood. I shower at the gym, so walking home with wet hair in the Swedish winter isn’t ideal.

As a Canadian living abroad, I love supporting Canadian brands.

So, I started looking at the online sales and found THE ONE.

Lululemon’s Cinch-Waist 600-Down-Fill Puffer.

Black. Down-filled. A hood AND a cinched waist.

Warmth without looking like a walking duvet?

I was in love.

A better love story than Twilight. Perhaps even Titanic.

Unfortunately, I had to let go.

And it wasn’t because there wasn’t enough room on the door, Jack.

It was because of a Canadian billionaire named Chip.

Two weeks ago, I’d included Lululemon in a LinkedIn post celebrating my favourite Canadian brands and designers.

Well, that aged nicely.

My Instagram algorithm had kindly informed me of Chip Wilson’s latest remarks.

On November 23, just FOUR DAYS before Black Friday, the Lululemon founder spoke at a women’s leadership conference in Calgary, Canada.

According to media reports, Wilson:

• Suggested Canadian women weren't having as many children as men wanted and made remarks about importing brides from Thailand.
• Suggested employers would be reluctant to hire young women in case they became pregnant.

Sir, did you read the invitation?

A WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE.

Attendees reportedly walked out, and his session was cut short.

I knew Wilson was controversial, but MAN. I hadn't realised the extent of it.

Yes, he no longer runs Lululemon, and the company has distanced itself from him in the past. However, he remains a significant shareholder.

So, I decided not to buy the coat.

Naturally, I headed over to Lululemon's Instagram.

Judging by the comments, I wasn't alone.

Now, imagine being Lululemon's community manager on BLACK FRIDAY.

Weeks of preparation.

Bet Chip wasn't on your content calendar.

And here's where my marketing brain kicked in.

I still loved the coat.

My perception of the PRODUCT hadn't changed.

My perception of the BRAND had.

Chip brought attention to Lululemon on one of the biggest shopping days of the year.

Just not the kind the marketing team wanted.

Will everyone feel the same way? Of course not.

But how many others reconsidered their purchases after seeing the news?

We don’t know.

Two weeks ago, I was celebrating Lululemon. Today, I’m choosing not to buy from them.

Same brand. Same products. Different sentiment.

We often talk about the power of earned media to drive sales.

Well, it works both ways.

Imagine spending years building a brand and a loyal community, only to have your own founder undermine that work.

You can remove the founder from the board.

But can you remove the founder from the brand?

Anyway, I’m still stuck with a coat I hate.

Thanks, Chip.

#Lululemon #BlackFriday #BrandStrategy #CommunityManagement #EarnedMedia #ConsumerBehaviour

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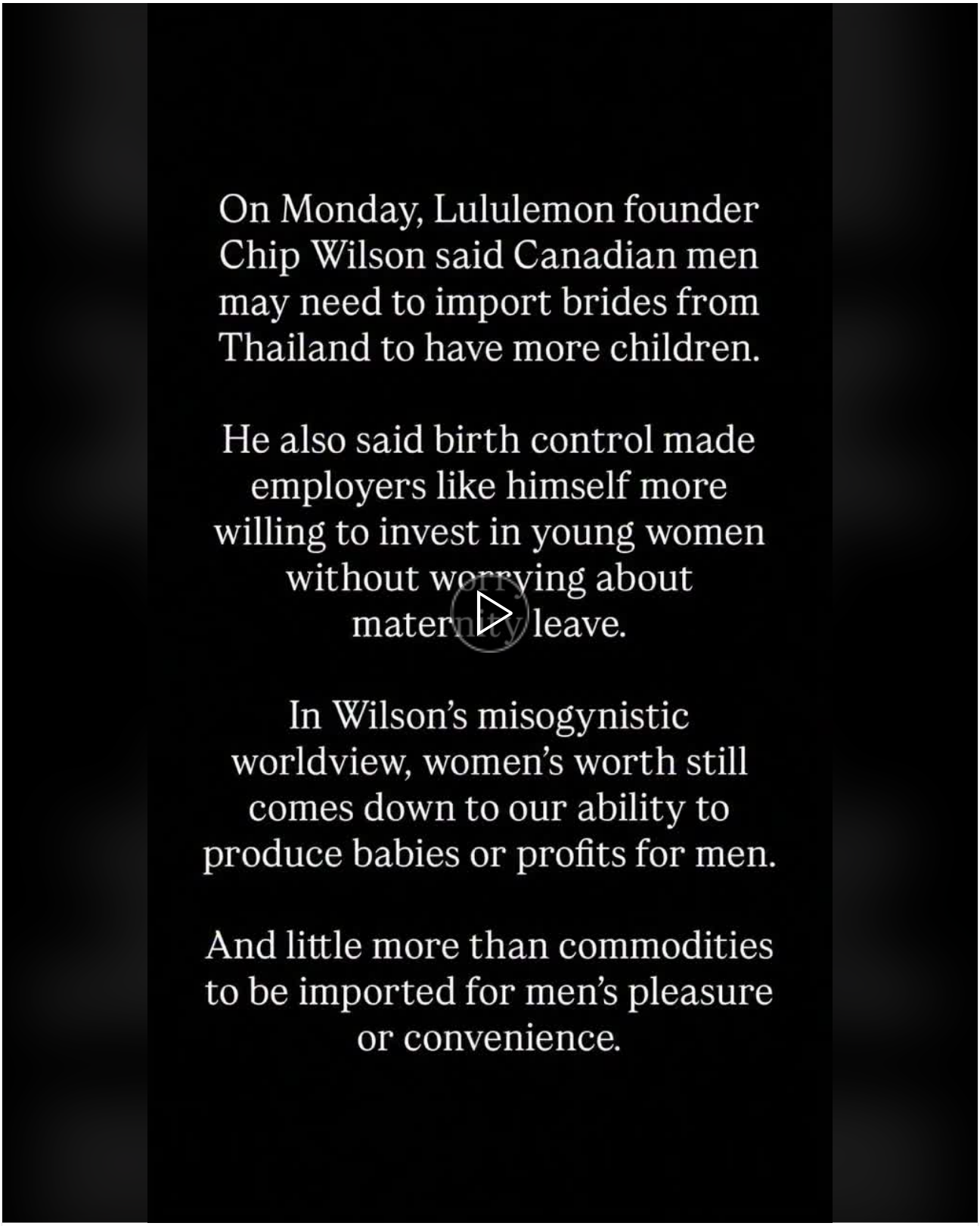
Lorena Acosta
18h · Edited

👀 What the actual f*ck did I just hear?

Chip Wilson, the billionaire founder of Lululemon, reportedly suggested that Can ...more



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Shipra Shrimali, MBA, CA
18h

A woman's possible pregnancy is still treated as a hiring risk. A man's possible fatherhood almost never is.

This week, Lululemon founder Chip Wilson reportedly suggested at a women's leadership forum in Calgary that employers might hesitate to hire young women because they could become pregnant soon after joining.

The moderator ended the session early.

What he said on stage reflects a concern many women face in job interviews.

A March 2026 Naukri survey of over 50,000 women professionals in India found that one in two hesitate to disclose their marriage or maternity plans during interviews.

What I find particularly ironic is the business Wilson himself founded.

At Lululemon, women constitute 75% of the workforce and 67% of the board. Women's products account for approximately $7 billion of its $11.1 billion annual revenue.

Businesses plan for every kind of change. Maternity should be no different. Yet it is often held against women before it has even happened.

A woman should be judged on her competence, not on a personal decision she may not even have made.

5

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Sarah Scott
19h

What responsibility does a company have when one of its most influential shareholders makes comments that many people find exclusionary?
Today I found Chip Wilson's comments today deeply disappointing.

I appreciate that Lululemon has publicly distanced itself from these views. However, Mr. Wilson remains one of the company's largest shareholders and continues to be closely associated with the brand.
So lululemon leadership, I have a question:
What steps are you taking to ensure that views that diminish, stereotype, or exclude people do not influence the company's culture, governance, leadership decisions, or business strategy?

As a developing leader, a public servant, and someone who helps lead a workplace network focused on advancing women, I believe values are not demonstrated through public statements alone. They are demonstrated through the systems, decisions, and accountabilities that exist behind them.
I am genuinely interested in hearing the answer, and I want to be part of the solution.

#Leadership #Inclusion #WomenInLeadership #CorporateGovernance

7 · 1 Comment

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Amira Williams
23h

Hands up. Who's actually got DE&I in their 2027 plans? 🙋🏾‍♀️

Because between AJ Odudu being labelled “aggressive”, Lululemon's founder suggesting employers might hesitate to hire young women because they could get pregnant, and everything else we've witnessed this year, never mind this week, some of your organisations had better make sure DE&I is firmly at the top of that list.

And I don't just mean adding a few awareness dates to the calendar.

I'm talking about whose voices are heard, who's in the room when decisions are made, the language we use, who gets opportunities and who gets overlooked. DE&I isn't just something we do for certain groups of people. It's part of how an organisation operates, and everyone has a role to play.

So yes, I'm talking about actual objectives, priorities, resources and accountability. Who's responsible for making progress? What are you trying to change? And how will you know whether it's working?

Because let's be real, 2026 has been a difficult and rather quiet year for DE&I.

And while I understand that organisations are navigating a challenging environment, the issues that made this work necessary haven't suddenly disappeared.

So I'm genuinely interested. As organisations look ahead to 2027, where does DE&I sit in the conversation? I'd hate for another year to go by where we acknowledge the problems but don't do enough to address them.

15 · 1 Comment

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Emily Ptak
23h

A few months ago, I received an eblast from **Axis Connects** about **Chip Wilson** appearing at their upcoming Women's Leadership Conference.

Yes, the same Chip who's best known for saying fat women can't wear his clothes (**lululemon** has tried to work to change this perception over the years since his departure, to its credit).

I sent an email to Axis requesting details about why a women's organization planned to platform a cis-hetero white male who is known to be harmful to women. I received a very well-thought-out but total PR response.

Well, today, I saw this article on **Newsweek**: **https://lnkd.in/gUaepTiQ**

Oh, the terrible man said something terrible about women at a women's event? My jaw stayed firmly in place.

How disappointing to see the response from Axis. Sounded a lot like, "How could we have known this would happen?" Despite people reaching out to inform them... this would happen.

Anyway, probably not a great day to work on the Axis comms team. And if you're planning a WOMEN'S EVENT as a WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION, remember this moment when selecting your speakers.

#BrandStewardship #StopGivingBadMenMicrophones #Feminism

Lululemon founder under fire for saying women aren't having enough kids
newsweek.com

60 · 17 Comments

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Jinbiao(Bill) XU
1d

What was he thinking? The founder of a company built on women humiliated women in front of 700 female executives.

lululemon just posted its first negative revenue growth since IPO， down 4% in Q2 FY2026, with leggings sales falling 20% and the stock roughly 80% below its 2023

peak.

Ten years of trying to build a second curve， menswear, shoes, tennis， never produced a second leg. Meanwhile, the founder's repeated insults to the core female customer keep burning brand equity.

The lesson for bosses: peak signals show up in three numbers, brand trust is a real asset, and the best time to plant a second curve is while the first one is still making money.

#SecondCurve #BusinessStrategy #BrandManagement #lululemon

The Second Curve Problem: One Yoga Pant Built an Empire， But It Can't Carry the Turning Point
Jinbiao(Bill) XU on LinkedIn

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