

MARKETING

Purpose-driven brands experience deeper engagement from customers: report

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Brands with an identifiable purpose are easier to identify with for consumers. Image credit: Loewe

By DANNY PARISI

Customers are far more likely to be loyal to a brand that they believe is driven by a specific purpose.

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According to a new report from Cone, 79 percent of consumers are more likely to remain loyal to purpose-driven brands, those that they perceive are striving to make a positive difference in the world beyond simply maximizing profits. For brands looking to gain the loyalty of consumers, dedicating themselves to a specific purpose is one surefire way of doing so.

"We have been tracking consumer expectations of brands in relation to supporting social and environmental issues for 25 years and we've seen that expectations increase consistently over time," said Whitney Dailey, vice president of marketing at **Cone Communications**, Boston. "Today, consumers really seek out more than a transactional relationship with brands, especially in our current tumultuous landscape where consumers are more engaged than ever and are looking to brands for additional backing on issues that matter most to them.

"Americans want to support companies that care about them personally and align with their personal values," she said. "In fact, we found eight in 10 Americans feel that when they buy products or services from purpose-driven companies, they feel like they're doing their part to make a positive impact.

"As the research shows, consumers are willing to support companies that lead with purpose in multidimensional ways, from advocating for that company if someone speaks badly of it to pride in being associated with it, such as wearing a prominent logo."

Finding purpose

Having a purpose can help brands get customers to identify with them and perceive them as something more than just a business.

According to Cone, 73 percent of consumers said they would defend a brand that had a purpose that they identified with.



Porter's latest issue was themed around the purpose of ocean conservation. Image credit: Porter

The positive effects of having a purpose also extend to customers' willingness to forgive a brand's missteps at 67 percent, pride at being associated with the brand at 70 percent and feeling a stronger emotional connection to the brand at 77 percent.

Cone lists the #MeToo movement and March for our Lives as examples of causes that brands have associated themselves with that received positive attention from consumers sympathetic to the same cause.

Retail, financial services and automotive are among the top industries where consumers said it was most important for brands to have an identifiable purpose.

A majority of consumers also believe that brands should have their purpose be clearly identifiable in easy to find places.

Building engagement

A brief survey of the luxury business shows that many luxury brands already seem to understand the importance of purpose.

For example, LVMH-owned fashion house Loewe is integrating into the art world to join the fight against AIDS.

The brand is creating a collection of T-shirts that each feature work from artist David Wojnarowicz. The collection will be on sale in New York at Printed Matter and on the brand's Web site, with proceeds going to Visual AIDS ([see story](#)).



Loewe's new t-shirt collection for Visual AIDS. Image credit: Loewe

Similarly, online retailer Net-A-Porter's magazine Porter is dedicating its summer issue to raising awareness about issues related to the preservation of the world's oceans.

Porter has recruited acclaimed photographer Mario Sorrenti along with cover model Anja Rubik to help helm the publication's Summer Escape issue, which will draw particular focus to the plastic crisis facing the world's oceans. The combination of fashion advertising, editorial content and activism towards a sustainable theme is at the core of Porter's latest edition ([see story](#)).

"Overall, this report shows that companies need to move their unique purpose to the forefront of their brands and communicate that purpose, not just to consumers but other stakeholders like investors and employees," Cone's Ms. Dailey said.

"The data also reveals the importance of walking the talk," she said. "This means that brands that want to lead with purpose must also ensure they are aligning their internal operations and creating the programs and policies to back that up.

"On a more tactical level, a revelation from the report is Americans' willingness to share a purpose-driven brand's content. So here, brands need to arm consumers with the tools to do so, whether that's branded hashtags, social media post templates and more."