

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

## Inclusivity, authenticity win over modern beauty buyers

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*The Estée Lauder x Kith collaboration spotlights natural beauty. Image credit: Estée Lauder*

By SARAH JONES

One of the main factors affecting beauty consumers' purchase decisions is diversity, with new research finding the majority of buyers prefer advertising that features models of varying ethnicities and body types.

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According to a study by Yotpo, beauty shoppers' values drive their choices, as they desire brands that are eco-friendly and inclusive. As consumers seek relatability and authenticity, peer recommendations and consumer-produced content are also becoming more important than brand marketing at prompting sales.

"Taking an inclusive approach pays," said Tomer Tagrin, CEO of Yotpo, New York. "Look at the massive success of brands like Fenty Beauty.

"By embracing diversity, you unlock a wider customer base," he said. "The best part is, any beauty brand can go this route. Glossier, for example, showcases photos on their site their own and uploaded by customers to show how their makeup would look on a variety of skin tones."

Yotpo surveyed 1,875 female consumers between the ages of 14 and 73, with respondents fairly evenly split among generations. Respondents came from the United States and United Kingdom.

### Direct-to-consumer

The beauty buyers surveyed by Yotpo showed a preference for purchasing directly from brands via ecommerce. About two-thirds say they have chosen to buy from a brand's direct-operated store rather than a multi-brand retailer due to factors such as better selection or pricing.

Others say that they buy directly since they love the brand or are enrolled in a loyalty program.

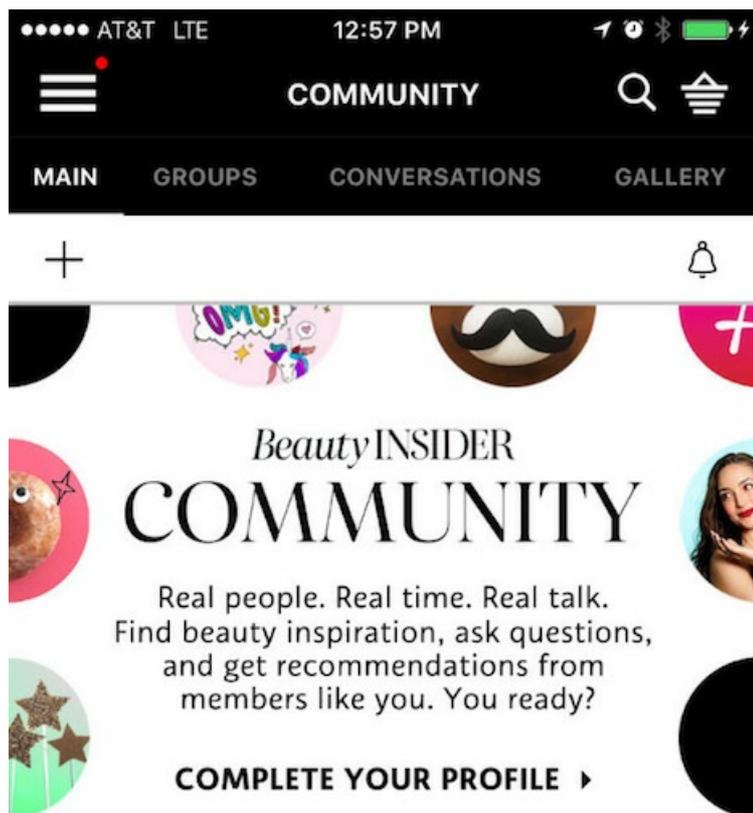
While influencers and brand content hold some sway for beauty shoppers, it is fellow consumers' reviews that are weighed most heavily for purchase decisions.

More than three in 10 consumers say they would buy something they do not need based on a review.

Word-of-mouth recommendations come in a close second to reviews, highlighting the emphasis placed on peer-to-

peer messaging.

In 2017, LVMH-owned beauty retailer Sephora launched its Beauty Insider Community to encourage peer-to-peer communications.



*Sephora Beauty Insider. Image courtesy of Sephora*

Instead of spurring a dialogue between brand and consumers, as many marketers often work towards, Sephora is taking a different approach to generating conversation among its enthusiasts. The beauty industry relies heavily on peer recommendations, and consumers often put more stock into influencers and friends' opinions rather than brands themselves, making Sephora's Beauty Insider Community an accurate read of current trends ([see story](#)).

"The data shows that social proof validation from fellow shoppers and friends provides the strongest impetus to purchase," Mr. Tagrin said. "Nothing establishes trust in a brand and its products like reviews, and referrals, photos or videos posted by customers are very influential as well.

"Particularly since choosing a beauty product is so personal and specific to the individual, leveraging these types of content assets in ecommerce can provide inspiration and instill confidence in purchase decisions," he said.

Brand marketing is most effective when delivered through direct channels such as social media and emails, rather than through digital ads or out-of-home placements.

"So many beauty start-ups are succeeding because they're going direct-to-consumer first, an approach that calls for them to deliver superlative experiences across every possible touchpoint," Mr. Tagrin said.

"This is not to say influencers aren't also important they're great for driving awareness," he said. "But the brand itself, inclusive of all of its direct channels, will always be its strongest marketing asset."

### Seeking values

When it comes to choosing brands, about half of consumers want to buy from a company that is either founded or led by a woman. This preference is even more prevalent among millennial and Gen Z shoppers.

A quarter of consumers say that clean beauty is the most important factor for them in choosing a brand.

Clean beauty is becoming another key word within the personal care industry as sustainability and wellness take over in all aspects of retail, and luxury retailers are some of the first to take it on. Both Barneys New York and Bloomingdale's are among the luxury brands and retailers who are hoping to capture the wellness-conscious beauty

consumer with new concepts ([see story](#)).

Twenty-five percent of beauty shoppers consider inclusivity the number one factor when choosing which brand to buy from.

Three-quarters of consumers want to see diversity of ethnicities in beauty advertising, and 84 percent prefer seeing models of different body types. Luxury brands have been working to capture a more inclusive perspective on beauty.

For instance, French fashion house Chanel is hoping to capture the attention of a younger, more diverse generation with its latest Beauty Talks interview.

Chanel's global creative makeup and color designer Lucia Pica sat down with actress and activist Yara Shahidi to highlight a new makeup palette. Ms. Shahidi follows in the steps of other women, including Lily-Rose Depp and Keira Knightley, who have been featured in Beauty Talks ([see story](#)).

"Consumers have a greater affinity for brands that reflect their own values and interests," Mr. Tagrin said. "There are any number of ways for brands to demonstrate that they share those values with their customers beyond ads: talk about it in press interviews, support particular causes or charities, align with influencers who focus on those interests, highlight individual team members who embody those values and use those topics as an opportunity to engage customers in conversation, especially on social media."

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