

MARKETING

## Value-driven positioning can prompt consumers to switch brands

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M.A.C's Viva Glam campaign has helped the brand attract customers. Image credit: M.A.C

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By SARAH JONES

Brands that stress authenticity and transparency are winning over consumers, with a new report finding that consumers would change their loyalty if they found another brand that better aligns with their values.

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Research from Blis finds that what consumers say they want and how they behave do not always align, with a discrepancy between self-reported attitudes and actions such as foot traffic. While consumers believe they place less importance on political and cultural messaging than some other aspects, brands that take a stand on these issues are actually seeing more of an uptick in shoppers.

"Our research underscores the need for brands to have a deep knowledge of not just what consumers are saying, but what they're actually doing," said Gil Larsen, managing director of **Blis Americas**. "If brands want to build loyalty heading into 2020, they'll need to continue creating personalized, unique experiences and understand the value of purpose-driven strategies for individual consumers."

Blis' report is based on a survey of 1,200 consumers and store visits to 20 retailers, including 12 that it identified as having taken a stand on a key issue this year.

### Causes and effect

When asked what the most important trait was for selecting a brand, 41 percent of consumers said authenticity, placing it first in the rankings.

Following authenticity were sustainability and community involvement, such as political activeness.

Authenticity is actually helping brands create a following, with Blis finding that foot traffic to these companies was up 21 percent over their comparative controls. For instance, Chipotle is winning more of a share of foot traffic than Qdoba thanks to its transparency about its ingredients, while Aerie's push to feature models in unretouched photos is also paying off compared to Gap.

While sustainability was highly ranked by 21 percent of customers, the impact on store visits was actually negative. Sustainably focused companies such as Patagonia and Whole Foods saw about 6 percent less traffic than other

value-driven firms with different focuses.

Nine percent of consumers seek out brands who are culturally involved, while 7 percent want to buy from brands who are politically active.



*Tamara Mellon aligned itself with the Women's March, getting closer to its consumers. Image credit: Tamara Mellon*

Despite the fact that 61 percent of consumers say they do not want brands to get political, consumers shopped 34 percent more with activist brands than they did on average. For instance, Nike's support of Colin Kaepernick and M.A.C.'s Viva Glam campaign for HIV research drove more traffic share for these brands when compared to Burton and Sephora, respectively.

While many question whether brands should comment on social or political issues, research shows that for Generation Z, social justice is the way to their hearts.

In an era where social norms seem to be shifting and important social conversations are at a high, a study by DoSomething.org found that 76 percent of Gen Z consumers have purchased or are open to buying from a brand based on the issues it supports. Many are now even seeking out brands, rather than finding them by happenstance, based on social causes ([see story](#)).

#### Personalization push

In addition to values-driven messaging, there is also an opportunity for brands to better tailor their mobile promotions to individual users. Mobile is an individual channel, with most shoppers the only one using their device, enabling brands to have a strong sense of the user profile.

While 55 percent of respondents believe that brands have done at least somewhat of a good job at personalizing their messaging, 30 percent say they have seen no evidence of customization.

Seventy-five percent of consumers are open to receiving purpose-centric messaging on their cell phones. However the top thing that respondents want to see in mobile ads is authenticity.

Mobile may be omnipresent, but television remains the channel that consumers say impacts them the most.

Consumer-oriented technologies, including artificial intelligence and automation, will dramatically impact customer experience sooner rather than later, according to Forrester.

Per Forrester's "The Future of CX" report, brands will need to emphasize context over channels as omnichannel retail becomes more prominent. Furthermore, loyalty continues to decline among consumers from Generations X through Z as they increasingly make values-based decisions ([see story](#)).