

MARKETING

## Convenience, consciousness "new essentials" for brands

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*Sixty-four percent of consumers shop wherever and whenever using mobile devices. Image credit: Rightpoint*

By NORA HOWE

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a shift in consumer sensibilities, and brands that respond to this change will be better positioned to earn their loyalty, according to a new study.

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CX platform Rightpoint's "The New Essentials" study examines how the health crisis has altered the products, channels and services consumers consider essential, and how this new consciousness will likely last beyond this year. Brands must keep up with these changes as well as deliver within the four C's consumers now demand: convenience, caution, cause and community.

"Luxury brands that are focusing on digital and pioneering new ground in partnerships and collaborations, video games, and social media/social shopping, will be the clear winners with the new consumer emerging in the post-pandemic world," said Phillip Jackson, chief commerce officer at [Rightpoint](#), Chicago. "Gucci is all-in on these themes, making recent investments in virtual apparel in Fortnite, a Snapchat lens that creates an AR virtual garden for a fragrance campaign, a digital-only fashion show and their recent collaboration with The North Face.

"Balenciaga's Afterworld Fall 21 collection video game is another excellent example of adaptation in luxury to attract the attention of a new consumer," he said.

The survey explored consumer mindset, category engagement and digital savviness as lift during the pandemic evolved. It focused specifically on three trends that have seen a leap since the pandemic began.

More than 1,000 consumers in the U.S. and Canada were surveyed between Nov. 20 and 28, 2020. Additionally, Rightpoint interviewed 10 digital executives to understand how organizations have capitalized on the shifting landscape.

### New essentials

Based on its understanding of consumer attitudes and behaviors, Rightpoint developed a set of insights related to the consumer consciousness. First, the researcher concluded that accelerated life is directly correlated with redefining what is considered essential.

Demographic and attitudinal shifts will transform how consumers live, make decisions and purchases.

According to the report, two out of three consumers have made significant lifestyle changes as a direct result of the pandemic, giving rise to a new class of trendsetting "life changers." Highly adaptable, young and economically comfortable, this group implies larger demographic and attitudinal shifts in the near future.

"A consumer is considered to be a 'life changer' if they have experienced job loss or career shift, had to move to a new city or re-evaluated other major parts of their lifestyle and spending habits as a result of COVID-19," Mr. Jackson said. "They tend to be more upbeat about the future, despite having suffered the worst of the effects of the economic recession the very definition of resiliency."



*Brands aligned around convenience are valued more by younger consumers. Image credit: Rightpoint*

Additionally, consumers under 40 reported increased reliance on digital conveniences like video calling, online-enabled food delivery and curbside pickup, while older consumers are more likely to have never used these services. For instance, the rapid adoption of the "buy online/pick up in store" model has shifted the retail experience.

The second insight considers the notion that individual perspective and points of view have redefined what consumers deem as essential. Rightpoint suggests that every individual created their own risk-benefit analysis in response to the pandemic, resulting in a fragmented perspective of needs versus wants that varies on an individual basis.

At the macro level, Rightpoint observed that what people are buying and the perceived value of that category aligns with the traditional pyramid structure in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Respondents who placed a higher value on categories at the extremes of the pyramid, however did not necessarily spend more money. Rightpoint suggests that the pandemic is accelerating pre-existing spending trends, not creating new ones.

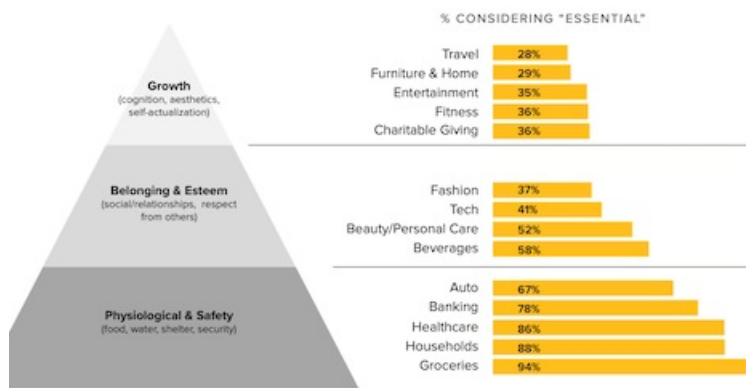
The third insight claims that brands aligned with convenience, community, cause and caution are not only valued by younger consumers, but expected.

Convenience is crucial in regards to factors that inspire shoppers to convert from browsing to buying, as 72 percent of consumers want a fast and accurate product search. Young shoppers are more likely to find conveniences such as flexible fulfillment, ways to contact customer service and personalized experiences as top motivators.

Mobile is the number one priority, as 64 percent of consumers shop and 52 percent buy wherever and whenever on their smartphones. In addition to mobile, Gen Z and millennials are significantly more likely than older consumers to browse and buy through connected TV or other devices.

In terms of community, Gen Z consumers use digital to enable connections with like-minded people as well as purchasing from like-minded brands with values they share, as 82 percent of Gen Z respondents would not ignore a brand's ethics for a good deal.

Sixty-eight percent of Gen Z consumers preferred discovering new brands on social media, and 41 percent admitted to doing more online gaming this year. Sixty-four percent are influenced by sites that have a distinct look and feel, and 56 percent said a compelling brand story influences their purchases.



*What people are buying and the perceived value of that category closely aligns with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Image credit: Rightpoint*

Overall, Rightpoint advises that enhancing the customer experience while implementing solutions to help appeal to consumer "growth" needs will garner brand loyalty. Brands who honor the humanity of their employees and the skills of digital content experts will maintain a positive trajectory past 2021.

### Social responsibility

Environmental and social consciousness have become essential for young affluent consumers, and brands have increased transparency regarding their efforts toward a more sustainable and inclusive future.

French luxury conglomerate Kering and environmental nonprofit Conservation International launched the "Regenerative Fund for Nature" to help finance farmers as they transition to regenerative agriculture across fashion's supply chain. The Regenerative Fund for Nature will provide grants to farmers, NGOs and key stakeholders who are on the frontlines of developing and scaling agricultural change on the ground ([see story](#)).

Italian fashion conglomerate Prada Group recently became the first luxury fashion company to join The Valuable 500, a global community dedicated to transforming the business system for the benefit of people with disabilities. The company strongly recognizes the intrinsic value of people who are disabled and commits to supporting all within its inclusion and sustainability agenda.

Prada Group is currently exploring different opportunities to define a long-term program of activities, which begins with a commitment to hire individuals with Down's syndrome into its retail network ([see story](#)).

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