

Pursuing purpose: The key to building resilient brands

It was the English rock group Transvision Vamp that popularised the phrase '*I don't want your money honey, I want your love.*' Although, we're all for (measured) idealism when it comes to love. In the world of branding, this just doesn't cut. Love and money are like two peas in a pod. People give their money to the brands that win their affections. What do people love more than their hard-earned money? Brands that make them feel good!

By Anele Nzimande and Thabiso Bhengu 28 May 2020



Photo by Andrea Piacquadio from [Pexels](#).

The way to a consumer's heart in our world today is through the creation of a purpose-driven brand identity. It's been proven – being a socially responsible company can bolster a company's image and make big bucks. Consumers today increasingly expect brands not just to have functional benefits but also to have a social purpose that they can buy into. One that reflects their own values back to them. Social purpose is no longer just a nice to have; it's a competitive advantage.

A 2017 Cone Communications CSR case study found that 88% of people profess to be more loyal to a company that supports social or environmental issues. There is, however, also an embedded cautionary tale here as well. As likely as consumers are to support brands that reflect their values, according to John Howell of the Triple Pundit, most people (59%) are likely to stop shopping at a company that supports an issue they disagree with. It's a tightrope that we need to walk very carefully. More and better messaging will be required for the public to believe in a company's authenticity.



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Nothing sets the stage for purpose-driven brand communications quite like a global pandemic. Overnight, every single brand was singing from the 'yes, we can' hymn book. And rightfully so. Right now, consumers need stories about hope, transcendence, and dreams anew in this harsh world we woke up in. This has made it so easy to connect with people without focusing on making a hard sell. We have the attention of billions of people with an appetite for bold new strategies and brands that will have the imagination to invent the future and take their consumers with them.

The duty of communicators henceforth is focusing all their efforts on entrenching social purpose in all brand and reputational communication. In the grand landscape of countless deals, promotions and sponsored posts brands need to ask themselves

how they can build an authentic reputation that is sustainable and enduring?



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Integrating social purpose into your business transforms consumers into champions of the values that your brand represents. A simple idea birthed in the boardroom gets an opportunity to become a social movement.

Myriam Sidibe, author of *Brands on a Mission* and global social mission director for Lifebuoy at Unilever, backs this view. In her critically acclaimed article titled Marketing meets Mission for the Harvard Review, Myriam Sidibe's says the following,

“Effective brand advocacy has several key characteristics. It promotes a positive vision for the future; it speaks to people's sense of justice and shared humanity...and it gives people agency, making them actors rather than just beneficiaries.”

The gift of the Covid-19 crisis is that it has taken us deeper on to this path. It was Elizabeth Gilbert who said, "ruin is the road to transformation." This is a critical moment for many brands who can reinvent themselves in the wake of the wave of change. There is a silver lining in every cloud. We have the power to make this new world fresh and more exciting than the one we left behind.

Attraversiamo!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bhengu Thabiso offers brand strategic advice to local & global companies. Anele Nzimande is a brand strategist and content manager.

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