

Is brand activism just a case of 'make them cry, make them buy'?

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As marketers, we have often questioned if there is any real value in being woke.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Woke, as referenced in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary [defines](#) woke as being “aware of and actively attentive to important societal facts and issues”, and there are indeed some important factors that marketers and brands need to be aware of.

Making the world a better place

It's becoming more and more obvious that younger generations like millennials and Gen Z are asking for change, even demanding it, but more importantly, brands have a moral obligation to make the world a better place.

Some brands have extremely large global spheres of influence while others may have a smaller geographical and regional footprint. Conscious consumerism, where consumers deliberately make purchasing decisions they believe have a positive social, economic, and environmental impact, is shaping up to become one of the biggest marketing trends since, well, sliced bread.



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When I first mentioned the word ‘woke’ what was the first thought that sprang to mind? Those young do-gooders maybe? Did you know that the first millennials are now approaching their 40th birthday and that the Gen Z'ers are reaching the workforce and will soon be the decision-makers of tomorrow? Think of your target market and how many brands are actively targeting these demographics. How is this demographic looking at your brand?

A meaningful connection

Every brand boldly states that their product is the best, or cheaper, or more effective than their competitors but consumers are looking for brands to stand for the same values that they have. Consumers want a meaningful connection with a product and that's where brand activism can create great customer loyalty and association.



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Effective brand activism should create attraction and attention to topics that raise awareness and fight a cause. And we are not talking about just slapping a flag onto a brand logo on social media, for example, the rainbow colours during LGBTQIA+ awareness months. This is most definitely not cause related marketing. CRM actively encourages the consumer to fight the good fight, to raise an ever-important social or environmental issue with the objective of being viewed as an awareness-raising agent.

There have been some really good examples of companies that have achieved activism, where their cause has a direct effect on the consumer's viewpoint and active participation. KFC and Pringles and the *Movember* campaigns are good examples as is SAB's efforts on GBV (Gender Based Violence). Patagonia's *Don't Buy this Jacket*, Gucci against gun violence, the list goes on, but even closer to home, Nike's unwavering support of one of South Africa's sporting heroes Caster Semenya, when the IAAF attempted to ban her unless she took hormone suppressant medicine, has achieved a great deal of affinity for the brand.

Now that's 'Walking the Talk'!

It's not only the millennials and Gen Z that are asking for change and demanding that brands do better or get left behind. More and more people are realising that they cannot just sit on the fence or take a back seat to what's happening around them. It is time for all of us to get behind issues that will bring about positive change for a better future so that the world is a better place for generations to come.

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