

Year of the social impact brand (again)

By  [Auryn Hiscock and Mkhaila Hunter](#)

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Amidst two extremes -- audience apathy on one end and backlash against perceived social washing on the other -- the ad industry has emerged fresh-faced and focused: Ready to prove that we're thoughtful, attentive partners who listen when our audience speaks, able to hold a conversation that doesn't always place ourselves and our interests at the very centre of it.



Auryn Hiscock and Mkhaila Hunter, executive creative director and strategic relationships & marketing manager at Fort respectively.

And for the most part, we're keeping our word.

Over the past few years, we've seen a shift towards the human brand with shared value — brands that use their power to paint pictures of an inclusive society.

It's been both monumental and vitally important, creating environments that have actually benefited their bottom line, and blurred the dichotomy between 'for good' and 'for-profit'. In doing so, we've reached a point where brands can no longer, nor should no longer stay silent about broad-reaching issues.

Besides, long gone are the days when consumers only bought what you were selling — now they're buying what you believe in.



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It's no surprise, either:

We live in a world where solutions to issues such as environmental impact, gender equality, equal pay, and racism are a shared responsibility, and given advertising's share of voice — [ad-makers spent ±R45bn on media](#) in 2017 alone — it's expected that brands step out from their own immediate interests and invest in a social or political issue that is bigger than themselves, even if it's using net neutrality with the view to sell a burger, eventually:

Eventually.

Similarly, when *Lad Bible* tackled the issue of pollution in the ocean with The Trash Isles, they shed light and made a difference on a United Nations issue outside of their own purview:

But where to next?

While creating powerful engines for change is nothing to sniff at, the question should be how we focus this momentum as we reach out into the new year and beyond, and give a voice to those outside of the mainstream.

The answer: Finding out who we aren't listening to today. While advertising might not ever be at the forefront of social change, we, as advertisers, have an important role to play in the process. It's an exciting time for the industry — one that holds a promise of a better future for a multitude of stakeholders.



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As we see more brands jump onto this trend and own the power of their voice, we'll continue to see awareness and measured improvements in areas such as social injustices, politics and the environment.

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