



Insights from “The Seven Change Waves Impacting the Events Industry: Why We Need to Care About Them”

**Lite Paper:** Snackable Whitepaper

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THE RISE OF THE

# Conscious Consumer

How Brands Can Gain  
Impact With Purpose

# Your Customer Is More Aware Than Ever Before.

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Consumers have become more socially conscious and vocal about their perspectives and are looking to support brands that align with their personal values. Brands of the future keep up with rapidly changing consumer sentiments because if they can't, consumers will find brands that can.

- Pete Stein  
President  
Merkle Americas





# Purpose Makes The (Consumer) World Go 'Round

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## They don't just aspire to live a sustainable lifestyle—they insist on it

But it's not just about sustainability. Consumers want more societal engagement from businesses along with purpose-driven initiatives, stances, and solutions. And the more consumers insist, the more they win.

Consumers think businesses are not doing enough to address:

- Climate change
- Economic inequality
- Energy shortages
- Healthcare access
- Trustworthy information
- Workforce reskilling

## Align With Your Consumers' Values

Prioritize target audience identification, research, and values alignment, because 63% of consumers buy or advocate for brands based on their beliefs and values.

That means that the ROI of purpose-led initiatives are more than just increased purchases. Your brand stands to gain a greater share of voice, consumer referrals, positive sentiment, and loyalty—which decreases customer acquisition costs.

## Align With Your Company's Values

Consumers told Havas that 75% of brands could disappear overnight and they wouldn't care—because only 34% think companies are transparent about their commitments.

It's not enough to only match what your consumers care about. Your initiatives should match your brand's DNA and have a clear delivery plan. Because 69% of employees consider "having a societal impact" a deal-breaking consideration for taking a job, your company culture should align with your initiatives, too.

## Adapt To Changing Needs

As online shopping exponentially grows, U.S. consumers broke records by spending \$211.7 billion on e-commerce purchases between Nov. 1 and Dec. 31, 2022. And now, more than half of consumers order online and pick up at a brand's physical location, with 58% using self-checkout in stores.

This digital-first focus also impacts brand experiences and events. Providing digital touchpoints and integrating a holistic experience across channels is mandatory for success. Meet consumers where they are and give them the power to choose how they want to interact.

# The Generation Gap

Terence Smith, fund expert and founder & CEO of Fundsmith, criticized Unilever, saying it “lost the plot” with its sustainability focus—but data shows that his generation isn’t the brand’s target audience.

Conscious consumerism is growing across customer segments, with purpose-driven consumers representing the largest segment of consumers (44%). However, the younger your target audience, the sooner you’ll have to show tangible, impactful results and not just vision statements or strategies.

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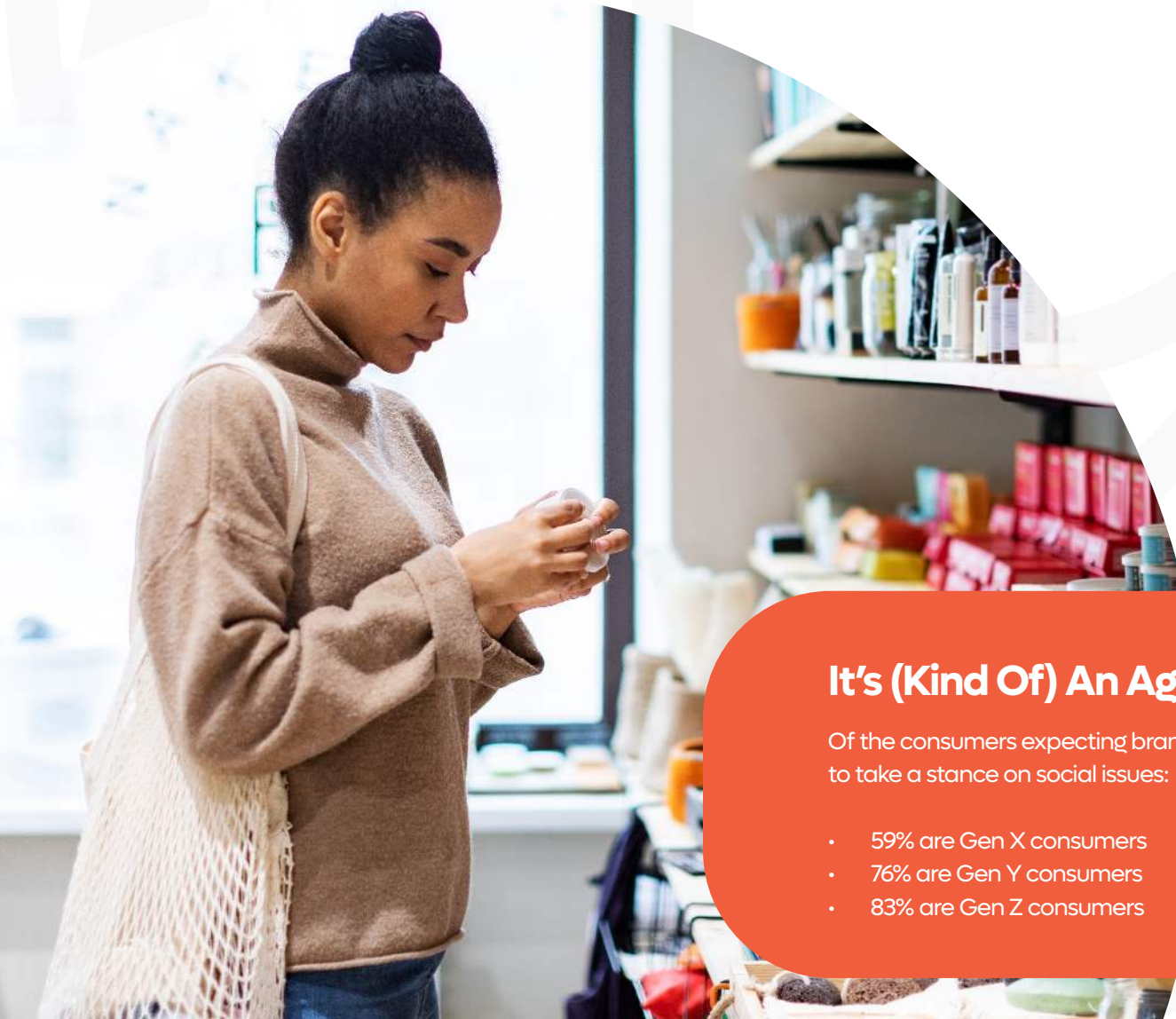
We are a generation for the people, and we tend to gravitate toward brands that align with beliefs similar to our own.

- Madeline Skrovan  
Marketing Student  
Arizona State University

## It's (Kind Of) An Age Thing

Of the consumers expecting brands to take a stance on social issues:

- 59% are Gen X consumers
- 76% are Gen Y consumers
- 83% are Gen Z consumers



# Challenges & Considerations

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## consumer pain points

What is your target consumer concerned about? What questions are they looking to answer? What challenges are they seeking to overcome? Don't rely on outdated customer data to give you an accurate roadmap in a rapidly shifting landscape. **Conduct consistent research to identify emerging behaviors.**

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## inflation & market shifts

**As inflation continues, brands must get savvy with cost-effective solutions.** Plant-based meat substitutes produce 30—90% fewer emissions than animal-sourced meats, but consumers pay roughly double per pound. Last year, nearly 30% of U.S. households bought plant-based alternatives--a 1.1 percentage-point drop from the year prior.

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## trust & brand sentiment

As business continues to be consumers' only trusted institution (outperforming NGOs, government & media organizations), **brands must strengthen—and in many cases, transform—their relationships with consumers.** This requires transparency and authenticity in both your strategies and communications.

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## company culture

Companies are fiercely competing with one another to source and keep their industry vertical's best talent—but the work you put into your company culture and fostering a positive & inclusive workplace can also affect your bottom line. **Don't just say what you're doing—show it by amplifying employee voices.**





# Like What You See? There's More Where This Came From.

Nearly two-thirds of business leaders say their companies need new digital solutions to survive and thrive in today's evolving environment. But what should you focus on—and how can you use it for business transformation?

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#### CITATIONS:

Adobe: [Holiday Shopping Season Drove a Record \\$211.7 Billion for E-commerce](#)  
Edelman: [2023 Edelman Trust Barometer](#)  
Financial Times: [What Terry Smith Gets wrong \(and right\) this time on Unilever](#)  
Forbes: [As Gen Z's Buying Power Grows, Businesses Must Adapt Their Marketing](#)  
Havas: [Meaningful Brands Report Finds We Are Entering the Age of Cynicism](#)  
IBM: [Consumers Want it All Report](#)  
Merkle: [The Next Generation of Consumer Behaviors Report](#)  
Reuters: [Conscious Consumerism Will Be Left on the Shelf](#)

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