



New Study Reveals Socially Conscious Brands Have An Edge With Consumers

January 9, 2018

Sprout Social's "Championing Change in the Age of Social Media" report finds two-thirds of consumers say it's important for brands to take public stands on social and political issues

In today's politically divisive culture, social media has given rise to the expectation that brands will weigh in on current events and share their values as a way to better engage their audiences. And while many brands have been hesitant to get involved in fear of backlash, those that have strategically seized the opportunity are being rewarded. Consumers are increasingly looking for businesses to make social and political stands a part of their public presence on social media and beyond, according to Sprout Social's [Championing Change in the Age of Social Media](#) report, released today.

[Sprout Social](#), a leading provider of social media management, analytics and advocacy solutions for business, found that two thirds of consumers feel it's important for brands to take a public stance on leading social and political issues like immigration, civil rights and race relations and more than half (58 percent) are most receptive to this happening on social media.

Sprout Social surveyed more than 1,000 people in the U.S. about how they want brands to communicate their positions and engage in conversations on political and social issues. Findings from the study create a blueprint for how brands can responsibly and effectively take part in these conversations to build lasting relationships with customers. Key findings include:

- Brands face more reward than risk: Consumers' most common emotional reactions to brands taking a stand on social were positive, with "intrigued", "impressed" and "engaged" emerging as the top three consumer reactions. Likewise, people will spread the word when they agree, but won't take action when they disagree. When consumers' personal beliefs align with what brands are saying, 28 percent will publicly praise a company. When individuals disagree with a brand's stance, only 20 percent will publicly criticize the company.
- Liberals are galvanized by brands that take stands, while conservatives are indifferent: 78 percent of respondents who self-identify as liberal want brands to take a stand, while just about half (52 percent) of respondents who self-identify as conservative feel the same. Likewise, 82 percent of liberals feel brands are credible when taking stands, compared to just 46 percent of conservatives.
- Brands can't change minds, but they can effect change: 66 percent of respondents say posts from brands rarely or never influence their opinions on social issues. Rather, respondents believe brands are more effective on social media when they announce donations to specific causes (39 percent) and encourage followers to take specific steps to support causes (37 percent), such as participating in events or making their own donations.
- Consumers want to hear from company leadership: Although respondents are almost twice as likely to say they'd rather hear about social and political issues from a company than a CEO on social media (22 percent versus 13 percent, respectively), people still feel C-suite members have a duty to speak up. And they especially want CEOs to use their voices – 59 percent of respondents say it's important for CEOs to engage with consumers and followers on social and political issues on social media.

"Brands that effectively navigate strategic decisions around when to take a stand on social have more opportunity than ever to turn potential risks into business opportunities," said Andrew Caravella, VP of Strategy and Brand Engagement at Sprout Social. "People not only want brands to speak out on social, but they want authenticity and values communicated cohesively by company leadership as well. People want to feel socially and politically connected to the brands they support—and while vocalizing opinions may drive away some customers, it will ultimately engender greater loyalty and enthusiasm from people who agree."

For more information and the full data report, click [here](#).

About Sprout Social

[Sprout Social](#) offers social media management, analytics and advocacy solutions for leading agencies and brands, including Hyatt, SoulCycle, Microsoft, GrubHub and Dropbox. Available via web browser, iOS and Android apps, the Sprout Social platform enables brands to more effectively communicate on social channels, collaborate across teams and provide an exceptional customer experience. [Bambu by Sprout Social](#), a platform for advocacy, empowers employees to share curated content across their social networks to further amplify a brand's reach and engagement. Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout is a Twitter Official Partner, Facebook Marketing Partner, Instagram Partner Program Member, LinkedIn Company Page Partner and Google+ Pages API Partner. Learn more at [sproutsocial.com](#) and [getbambu.com](#).

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