



## New Data Reveals Consumer Skepticism When Brands Take A Stand

November 5, 2019

*Sprout Social's latest Brands Get Real report reveals 70% of consumers want brands to take a stand, yet more than half (53%) believe brands take a stand solely for public relations and marketing purposes*

Brand-sponsored cause marketing is now the norm, evoking apprehension among consumers around what's authentic and what's simply a marketing ploy. Released today by Sprout Social, "Taking a Stand and Creating Change in the Conscious-Consumer Era" found 35% of consumers perceive brands speaking out as jumping on the bandwagon. But while there is skepticism about the motivations for brands taking a bold stance on issues, it can be effective when done with the right intentions and through the right channels. Two-thirds of consumers say brands are effective at raising awareness around important public issues when they take a stand on social media.

[Sprout Social](#), a leading provider of social media analytics, engagement and advocacy solutions for business, surveyed 1,500 U.S. consumers to determine when and why they want brands to speak out on public issues and how brands can make a difference using social media. Seventy percent of consumers say it's important for brands to take a stand on public issues, up from 64% of consumers who felt similarly two years ago. And of the consumers who want brands to take a stand on social, 66% believe brands should do so because they can create real change. There is still great opportunity to connect with consumers on hot-button issues, as long as brands are communicating how their influence on social contributes to actual change.

The report further explores which issues consumers want brands to take a stand on and who they want driving these conversations for brands on social media. Additional insights include:

- Brands can create change when it comes to voting and moving a political agenda forward. Forty-one percent of consumers say their political opinions are occasionally to frequently influenced by what brands post on social media, a 21% increase from consumers who said the same thing in 2017. Additionally, when prompted by a brand, 61% of consumers will continue to research a political issue further and 53% of consumers say they are likely to register to vote.
- Not all issues are created equal in the eyes of consumers. Healthcare (39%) is the number one issue consumers want brands to take a stand on, followed by labor laws (38%) and climate change (36%). And the importance of topic differs for conservatives and liberals as well. For conservative consumers, the number one issue they want brands to take a stand on is healthcare; for liberal consumers, it's climate change.
- Speaking out about hot-button issues doesn't come without risk. Fifty-five percent of consumers say they would boycott or discontinue shopping with brands that support public issues that don't align with their own views. And 34% of consumers would decrease their spending with a brand whose stances they disagree with. Taking a stand is risky, but it's worth it. When brands do take a stand consumers align with, 36% say they'll purchase more from that company.
- Consumers are also looking for employees to take a stand. More than three-quarters (77%) of all consumers believe employees have a responsibility to speak up when their employers make business decisions contradicting a company's stated values. And 51% of consumers believe social media provides employees the best outlet to voice their beliefs.

"Consumer skepticism is high as the social and political landscape is increasingly saturated with brands taking a stand, making it more important than ever for brands to be authentic in their approach and ensure their stances are aligned with the values their customers have come to expect," said Jamie Gilpin, CMO at Sprout Social. "As we head into an election year, brands need to be mindful and intentional about the issues they support, prioritizing consistency with messaging and highlighting action-driven messages on social media."

For more insight on the role of brands taking a stand on social media, download the full data report [here](#).

### About Sprout Social

[Sprout Social](#) offers deep social media listening and analytics, social management, customer care, and advocacy solutions to more than 20,000 brands and agencies worldwide. Sprout's suite of solutions supports every aspect of a cohesive social program and enables organizations of all sizes to extend their reach, amplify their brand and create the kind of real connection with their consumers that drives their businesses forward. Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout operates across major social media networks, including Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram and LinkedIn.

### About the Data

The "Taking a stand and creating change in the conscious-consumer era" study is based on a survey of 1,505 U.S. consumers. The survey was conducted online between August 21-26, 2019. Graphics are rounded to the nearest percentage and may not add up to exactly 100%.

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