

Nearly half UK consumers abandon brands due to poor corporate behaviour

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Consumers are taking an increasing interest in the ethical practices of the companies they buy from, with almost half saying that they have abandoned brands due to poor corporate behaviour.

A survey of 2,000 consumers published on Monday by media agency MediaCom found half of consumers said that they are willing to pay more for a brand that supports a cause that is important to them, while 63 per cent said that they believe brands have a

responsibility to give back to society.

A total of 80 per cent said that companies must take steps to minimise their impact on the environment.

However, 65 per cent suspect that companies are overstating their environment-friendly credentials and 45 per cent admitted they were sceptical of any brands claiming to support good causes.

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Last month, Pepsi faced a fierce backlash on social media after it released an advert featuring Kendall Jenner joining a peace march and handing a police officer a can of the brand's flagship drink. The company pulled the ad after just one day saying: "Clearly we missed the mark, and we apologise."

McDonald's also came under fire last week, after TV viewers said the company's latest advert in the UK was "exploiting childhood bereavement" to sell burgers.

The Wonder Woman film has made a questionable advertising choice
UK companies spent more than £10bn on online advertising last year
9 of the worst advertising fails ever. YouTube could lose up to \$750m from advertisers' boycott. The company took the decision to withdraw the advert from all media only a few days after its launch.

Commenting on the survey, John Shaw, chief product officer at Brand Union, a global brand and creative design consultancy agency, said it is important to distinguish between what shoppers say and what they do.

"When people say they are 'willing to pay more', then take care... It's what they actually part

with money for that matters, and it always 'looks better' to say that you support brands with a cause. When money becomes tight, this willingness can evaporate alarmingly quickly, as happened to sales of organic food after the financial crisis," Mr Shaw said.

Mr Shaw pointed out, however, that brands need to recognise the "cynical exploitation" of these feelings is increasingly easily spotted and may be punished.

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