



Social Change Hub

[CONTENT](#) [OPINION](#) [PEOPLE](#)

PAULINE ROBSON, HEAD OF RWI 31 MAY 2017

Purpose led communications and behaviour pose a huge opportunity for brands to better connect with consumers, and positively impact both society & the bottom line.

Our consumer research study found that 63% of people believe that brands have a responsibility to give back to society.

And whilst there are some who may argue that if brands focus on purpose they are forgetting about profit, the two are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to do good and make money, as brands such as innocent, Patagonia, Ikea, H&M, Always and Churchill have found out.

It has always been important for brands to have a clear purpose. But purpose exists on a spectrum. Some brands have a purpose that focusses on the individual, whilst at the

broader end of the spectrum others are considering their impact on the wider world.

What we're seeing more of now is brands communicating at that broader end of the spectrum. They're communicating how their brands address the concerns of the society they operate within – just look at some of the big campaigns from the last year; Always' #likeagirl, Intermarche 'Inglorious' Fruits and Veg, or Churchill's 'Lollipoppers' work.

Our research suggests that people are open to this. We found that 49% of people, and 60% of 18-24s say that they will pay more for brands that support causes that are important to them; whilst 53% say have bought or stopped buying a brand because of its values and behaviour.

Business is trying to change for the better, and at the same time consumers are saying that they want business to behave better.

Yet 45% of people also say that they are sceptical of brands who claim to support good causes. It's a fine line that brands need to tread today.

So how do brands go about communicating their purpose in an appropriate and effective manner?

1. Make sure your purpose fits. Does it reflect what you are already doing as a brand that positively impacts society? Does it align with the values of your audience? Our research found that people are motivated by different issues and these altered depending on how engaged they were with society, as well as on their age and income levels.

2. Be positive, and be specific. Clarity is important in communication – that fact stands true when talking about purpose as well. Vague promises to “save the world” are unrealistic and untrustworthy.

3. Be action orientated. Purpose led communications campaigns should ensure that they involve real action not just badging. Trust in business is at just 45% in the UK; people are

more likely to believe your promises if there's tangible evidence that you mean what you say.

4. Eliminate the negative: Show people the steps you're taking to reduce any negative impacts that your brand may have on society.

5. Work with real people. Contributing to the sustainable future of society means contributing to the lives of real people. So talk to them. Employees, customers, civil groups, and academic experts are all good places to start. And when it comes to identifying partners, look for a broad mix of organisations that share your values.

Our belief is that purposeful communications can bring brands and consumers together, generating trust and meaning when done in an authentic and thoughtful manner.

CONTENT OPINION PEOPLE