

How Apple, Birkenstock, and Taco Bell earn consumer trust and loyalty

Article

Apple uses safety and security to win over consumers. Birkenstock focuses on education, showcased through a three-part docuseries. And Taco Bell, with the help of Pete Davidson,

apologized for “over-innovating” its breakfast menu.

Using research from the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer report, we share four ways brands can score consumer trust and loyalty.

1. Know what’s important to consumers

The stat: 73% of consumers worldwide say they place more value on brands that increase their sense of safety and security, up 9 percentage points from last year, per Edelman. Only 27% say they’re more attracted to brands that spark a sense of adventure.

The strategy: Some brands may have an easier time illustrating how they contribute to consumers’ safety (e.g., it’s pretty obvious how a home security system keeps you safe, but a little harder to understand how a lipstick might). No matter the category, brands can assure consumers that their products are safe to use and find ways to show how they promote consumers’ general well-being.

The result: Apple has earned the trust of consumers through its continued commitment to their safety and security. Just recently, **Apple announced a slew** of new features giving users greater control over their data as well as other capabilities designed to protect user safety.

2. Use branded content to engage (as well as to sell)

The stat: Beyond purchasing or using a product, 79% of consumers worldwide say they directly interact with brands in other ways, like consuming brand content, participating in brand activities, connecting on social media, or sharing feedback, per Edelman.

They do this to evaluate a brand beyond its product, save money with discounts, and gather other information and learn things.

The strategy: To increase engagement, brands should play into consumers’ curiosity with content that educates them on brand values, how a product is made, or behind-the-scenes features of ad campaigns. But make sure to keep the customer perspective in mind: 76% of consumers worldwide say that brand attempts to engage them go wrong because they lack relevance, per Edelman.

The result: Last July, **Birkenstock created the first global campaign** in its 248-year history to explain why its sandals look the way they do. “Ugly for a Reason” is a three-part,

documentary-style series that illustrates the complexity of the human foot and why proper footwear is so important. A little over a year later, the brand is the **unexpected breakout star of the “Barbie” movie**. Coincidence? Maybe, but we’d bet the campaign couldn’t have hurt.

3. Diversify your channel presence

The stat: Consumers’ top-three sources for learning about a new brand or product are brand communications, media, and search, according to Edelman’s report. Meanwhile, the top-three sources for learning if a product will perform well are consumers’ own experiences, customer reviews, and media.

The strategy: Consumers go to different channels for different purposes. They may start on TikTok to discover new beauty products but then move to Google when they find something they want to learn more about. They may even wait to purchase the item until they see it in-store. Brands need to make sure their messaging is consistent across channels while also tailoring it to the platform.

The result: Charlotte Tilbury products can be found all over TikTok, but to reach more consumers, the beauty brand launched its **own ecommerce app** with personalized recommendations and how-to videos. The brand can also be found in Sephora, on its own website, and on Amazon.

4. Take accountability

The stat: Over two-thirds (69%) of consumers worldwide say that owning up to mistakes is a very or extremely effective way to build or increase trust, followed by being transparent about climate impact, supply chain, and employee diversity (63%), and working with the government to develop regulations (55%), per Edelman.

The strategy: Brands that take responsibility and course-correct are more likely to win customers back after a blunder. The most important thing is to listen to your customers when they tell you something isn’t working—not double down on it.

The result: After some experimentation with its breakfast menu (including the Naked Egg Taco and Waffle Taco), Taco Bell got the hint and went back to basics. To **apologize for its “over-innovated” menu**, the restaurant chain created a campaign with comedian Pete

Davidson about going too far. However, it's important to note: Taco Bell's apology matches its "mistake." Serious missteps require serious (and sincere) apologies.

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