

# Do PR Stunts Boost Brand Perception?

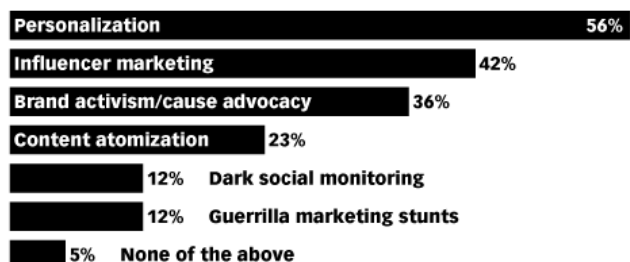
## Article

Even though PR stunts can be polarizing, brands keep foisting them onto the public. Is this working?

Marketers themselves are mixed. In a survey conducted by **OnBrand** and **Bynder**, only 12% of US and UK marketers considered guerrilla marketing an exciting trend to explore this year. Tangentially related tactics like influencer marketing (42%) and brand activism (36%) had far more appeal.

## Exciting Marketing Trends to Explore in 2018 According to UK and US Marketers

% of respondents



Source: OnBrand and Bynder, "The 2018 State of Branding Report," March 20, 2018

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This year, high-profile stunts included IHOP claiming it was swapping pancakes for burgers and renaming itself IHOB, McDonald's turning its iconic M upside down for International Women's Day, and more recently Payless ShoeSource creating a fake retailer called Palessi, complete with a website and Instagram account. Footage of influencers singing the praises of cheap footwear with luxury price tags at the opening party was then used in an ad campaign.

According to a [YouGov](#) survey, some of these stunts are memorable. At least temporarily. On November 28 (the day of the Payless campaign), 12% of US adults reported seeing a Payless ad in the past two weeks compared with 18% on December 4.

But when asked whether they had heard anything—positive or negative—about Payless via news, advertising or word-of-mouth, there were marked differences between age groups. Between November 28 and December 4, the buzz score among consumers ages 35 to 49 rose from five to 20 while millennials' decreased from 12 to zero.

This isn't to say that these marketing tactics are more effective on older consumers across the board. Consumers have become skeptical even when brands attempt to be altruistic. When [Morning Consult](#) surveyed US internet users about their thoughts on [Nike's campaign featuring former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick](#) in September 2018, more saw it as a publicity stunt (38%) than a genuine effort to acknowledge Kaepernick's actions (32%).

But what might initially seem like stunts can become an authentic part of a brand's story. When REI decided to close on Black Friday in 2015 and pay employees to not come to work using #OptOutside as a hashtag, it could've been viewed as an attention grab. The media coverage has died down, but the outdoors retailer has kept the tradition alive each subsequent holiday shopping season.