

What can brands do to establish successful, sustained relationships with Black consumers?

Article

A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is critical to Black shoppers—but there's more to DEI than hiring and employee-engagement practices. A lack of diversity, equity, and

inclusion was the No. 1 reason that Black adults in the US were dissatisfied with their purchases, per an October 2021 study by McKinsey & Company. [Read more about how concerns related to DEI permeate all aspects of the shopping experience here.](#)

Like any long-lasting relationship, a partnership with Black consumers should start with a deep understanding and appreciation of the elements that make them, as individuals and as a group, unique.

Once companies have clear insight into who their Black customers and prospects are, they can tailor their offerings and messaging accordingly. **But it's not enough to simply flip the messaging and packaging every February or Juneteenth.** For the relationship—and revenues—to flourish, companies need a strategic approach and sustained commitment.

Understand how DEI concerns manifest across customer needs

To understand Black consumers, companies need to acknowledge and meet their discrete diversity, equity, and inclusion needs. First, they must recognize the way these needs manifest in a desire for other attributes, such as value, convenience, and quality. Second, companies should understand how these needs vary depending on the product or industry—and, importantly, on the social status of the customer. And third, they must tailor marketing strategies and solutions to appeal to these specific needs, incorporating tactics to drive long-term engagement.

- **Black women outperform Black men by various measures but also experience the dual stresses of racial and gender inequalities.** DEI efforts may resonate better with Black women (as well as other social justice-minded consumers) if companies recognize intersectionality and address common interests and concerns across intersectional demographics.
- **Young Black adults' educational achievement underpins their growing economic power.** An increasing number of highly educated Black professionals are entering the workforce: As of 2020, 40.2% of Black millennials had a college degree compared with 29.0% of Black Gen Xers, per the census data. Companies would be wise to tailor their product lines to this population's needs. Expect a growing market with diverse tastes and demand for high-quality products and services.
- **The higher percentages of nontraditional Black households challenge the conventional notion of nuclear families.** Unmarried but cohabiting couples, co-parenting but noncohabiting households, and multigenerational households may have different consumption patterns and

decision-making processes. Targeted and in-depth surveys of different types of households can provide brands with greater insights into their specific needs.

- **Black Americans face challenges in healthcare.** Close to 1 in 7 Black people in the US had some type of disability in 2020, per the Census Bureau. Black adults ages 40 and older also experienced higher rates of ambulatory and independent-living difficulties than the national average. Moreover, the older Black population faces obstacles in health insurance coverage, quality of care, physical access to services, and provider representation and understanding. There are tremendous opportunities for companies to develop digital and other healthcare solutions to address those challenges.

Collaborate with Black communities for the long term

Companies can help Black communities address areas of inequity. The first step is to recognize the problem, then work internally and with community stakeholders to find solutions.

- In the digital realm, examine and improve algorithms in areas such as recruiting, customer relations, ad targeting, and service applications to prevent racial bias. Enact policies to fight racism on the brand's app, website, and other places where the brand is frequently represented.
- To support equal access to healthcare, work with healthcare entities to offer digital solutions and access to high-quality providers. Increase Black patient and provider representation in clinical trials.
- Advocate equity in education and the workforce by developing or supporting the deployment of digital supplemental education for Black students. Build talent pipelines by providing internship opportunities to Black youth.
- For companies in financial services, reward Black students' educational achievements with easier access to financial resources and services.
- Recognize long-established community roots. Brands that create innovative business solutions, invest in Black neighborhoods, and support social causes to help remove geographic barriers to opportunity have the potential to build long-lasting relationships with Black consumers.

Read the full report.

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Spotlight: Black Consumers 2022

