

Be Cautious About 'Cashing In'

Maintaining Authenticity Through Cause Marketing

ARTICLE | **SEPTEMBER 14, 2020**

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Speaking with authenticity is a trait not often associated with brands and marketers. They are, after all, always trying to sell—and the pandemic hasn't stopped them. April 2020 data from digital asset management firm Bynder found that while only a small proportion of marketers worldwide had significantly increased their campaigns, more than a quarter had made at least a small increase.

To What Degree Has the Coronavirus Pandemic Affected the Number of Campaigns Marketing Professionals Worldwide Are Going to Market with?

% of respondents, April 2020



*Note: numbers do not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Bynder, "The State of Branding Report: COVID-19 Edition," May 6, 2020*

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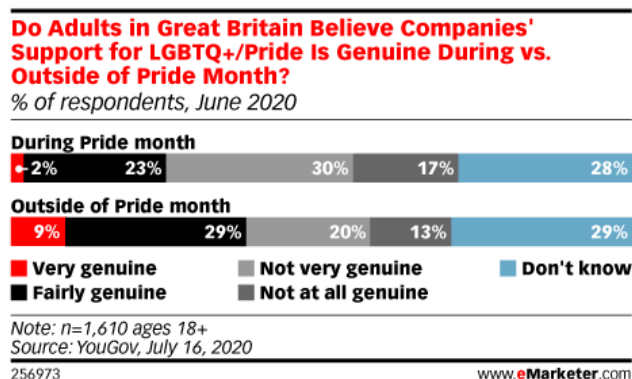
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Being practical about the business is key, but brands must do right by their staff and shouldn't lose sight of how most of their customer base is also hurting. For example, messaging from brands like McDonald's and Audi about their social distancing policies doesn't necessarily carry much weight or sincerity for consumers who are trying to cope with their own problems. When a brand does right by its customers, and even its staff, it stands to benefit from some positive vibes.

"If a brand isn't taking steps to protect its staff or customers, then that's massive damage that cannot be recuperated in a few weeks," said Jenny Stanley, founder and CEO of digital creative agency Appetite Creative. "Doing the right thing by your own customers, along with standing for things like sustainability, for example, is going to be super important for brands."

While appearing to do the right thing has never been more important for brands, shallow and insincere messaging could be damaging. Being a conscientious marketer involves an always-on attitude to "cause marketing" and not just jumping on the latest hot-button issue.

June 2020 data from YouGov showed that only 25% of adults in Great Britain felt that companies showing support for the LGBTQ+ community during Pride Month were being genuine—almost half thought that such messaging was not genuine. Outside of Pride Month, though, 38% of respondents saw such messaging as genuine, while only a third felt it wasn't genuine.



Another June study from YouGov, for the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) UK, illustrated how consumers were placing increased emphasis on advertiser behavior during the pandemic. It found that 45% of adults in Great Britain felt they'd seen "too many adverts where companies are trying to take advantage of the coronavirus."

"People have these moments in their lives where they realize that humans aren't the most powerful things in the world," said Ameet Chandarana, an independent marketing consultant. "For a lot of people, what's happened now has done that—and big companies are actually scared of this. If people realize they don't need as much, demand goes down, and then the shareholders aren't happy because they don't get the dividend. The only way of breaking the cycle is to not overconsume. Be a conscientious capitalist, consumer, and marketer."