

Consumers are changing and so are their choices

By [Greg Viljoen](#)

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Today's consumers expect more from the brands they support and the demand for environmentally-friendly trade is on the increase.



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If there is a silver lining to the global pandemic that we are still currently experiencing, it is the growing trend of consumers that are more conscious of their environmental impact and their expectations for retailers to be 'more green.'

This UK study, '[Selling Sustainability: Adapting to the New Conscious Consumer](#)', surveyed 2,500 consumers from the UK, Ireland and France about their current shopping habits and environmental and ethical expectations from online retailers and brands.

The temporary closure of physical shops and stringent protocols attached to the current shopping experience have given consumers the chance to re-assess and re-evaluate their shopping habits.

Over one-third of shoppers say they are now more aware of the environmental impact their online shopping habits have and close to three-quarters of consumers surveyed expect both online retailers and brands to use recyclable packaging (73%) or minimise their use of packaging (74%).

Couple this with a growing trend of the 'work-from-home employee,' which has given many the opportunity to reassess the impact that travelling to work each day has on both the environment (every city's carbon footprint has been greatly reduced), and on their own wellbeing, and it is quite easy to see why people's views are changing.

Just recently, Salesforce, an American cloud-based software company headquartered in San Francisco, announced that its employees would have the option to work remotely full time, even when it is safe to return to the office.

"An immersive workspace is no longer limited to a desk in our Towers; the 9-to-5 workday is dead; and the employee experience is about more than ping-pong tables and snacks," Brent Hyder, the president and chief people officer of Salesforce, wrote on a [blog post](#) announcing the change.

Conscious Consumers

In a recent blog in 2019, [Social Impact: Why Brands should be moving from 'for profit' to 'for benefit' model](#) I put a strong case forward as to why brands need to become more aware of the changing views of consumers.

While this blog focused primarily on the impact that Generation Z and Gen Y (millennials) have had on consumerism, we are now seeing a broader trend of conscious consumer, as big questions about our lifestyle and the future of our existence on this planet continue to be asked.

"...lifestyle patterns combine the virtues of demographics with the richness and dimensionality of psychological characteristics . . . Lifestyle is used to segment the marketplace because it provides the broad, everyday view of consumers lifestyle segmentation and can generate identifiable whole persons rather than isolated fragments." - Factors Influencing Consumer Decisions

Lifestyle is a key segmentation that marketers look at and for good reason.

A strong emotional connection between a brand and its consumers by selling a sensibility, an attitude, a set of values they hope will resonate strongly with the target segments they want to reach, is one of the most powerful means to building a strong customer base.

Today's consumer will proudly support your product and share this with the world if they feel it identifies with their ethos.

Green-conscious, not 'greenwashing'

Purpose-led business practice continues to gain momentum as brands and businesses recognise the shifting trend.

But be warned. Consumers are becoming more informed than ever and are taking a bigger interest in the impact we are having on the planet.

While shoppers are more aware now than ever of the ethical and environmental impact of goods and services, they are also not easily fooled by brands that use this simply as a marketing tool with no real follow through.

This is commonly known as 'greenwashing,' and can really backfire on a brand as highlighted in my blog from last year, [Cause Marketing Campaigns](#) – the good and the bad.

Creating a purpose-driven brand or evolving an existing brand takes planning, research and a close look at its core purpose and always considering what the brand means to its consumers.

ABOUT GREG VILJOEN

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