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CONSULTING

Epitomizing Empathy

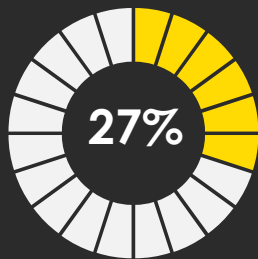
How should marketing connect with the masses by credibly tapping into their shared humanity?

Mintel Consulting

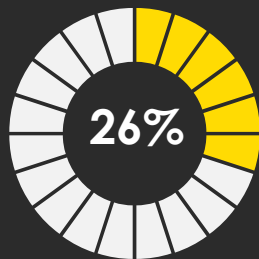
Ella Schindler, Associate Principal Consultant



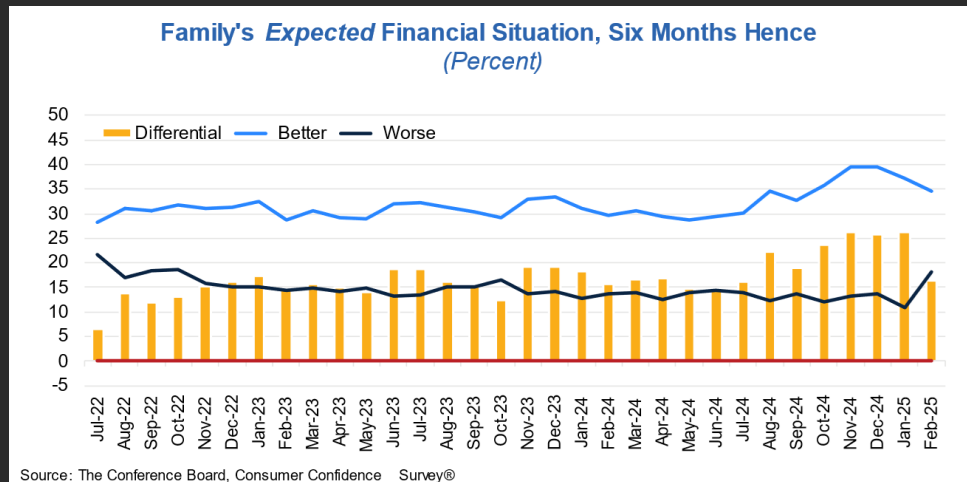
With consumer confidence sharply declining in the past couple of months there is room for a brand to re-instill a positive outlook in an increasingly forlorn and skeptical population.



of consumers expected business conditions to worsen in February 2025, up from 19.6% in January 2025



of consumers anticipated fewer jobs to be available, up from 21% in January 2025



It is no secret that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has become a polarizing subject, leading to a widespread hushing of DEI policies and marketing.

Google Ends Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Hiring Goals

The changes, confirmed by Walmart on Monday, are sweeping and include everything from not renewing a five-year commitment for an equity racial center set up in 2020 after the police killing of George Floyd, to pulling out of a prominent [gay rights index](#). And when it comes to race or gender, Walmart won't be giving priority treatment to suppliers.

HOW DEI CUTBACKS ARE IMPACTING BRAND MARKETING AND AGENCY STRATEGIES

There's already been a dip in Black History Month campaigns—and executives say the trend will only worsen

American Airlines ends DEI hiring practices

Amazon

In a [December memo](#) to employees, Amazon said it was "winding down outdated programs and materials" related to its efforts around DEI.

Meta Is Ending Its DEI Programs, Replacing Them With... DEI Programs?

Trump asks Apple to end diversity policies after shareholders vote in favor

PBS Closes DEI Office After Trump Executive Order

Delta CEO promotes DEI initiatives as 'merit-based' following Trump executive orders

Target is the latest company to roll back some DEI programs

This pullback has deepened the divide between brands and consumers who feel that their values, priorities, and needs are not being properly considered.

60%

of consumers **support diversity, equity and inclusion** efforts across the workplace, media or brand marketing

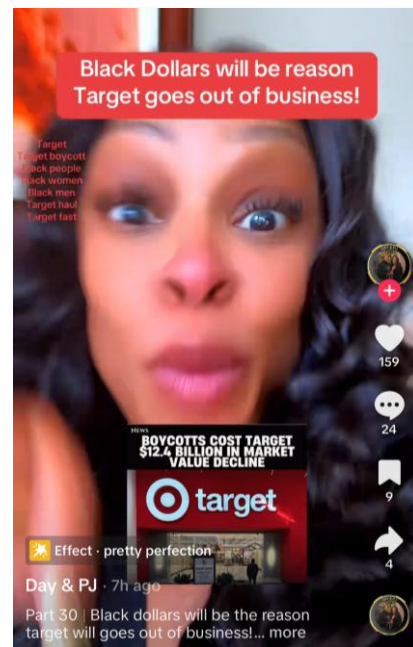
58%

of people do not feel they were **authentically represented** in media this past year

58%

of consumers agree that efforts to make products and advertising more **diverse, equitable and inclusive** is a good thing, yet a similar share feel **the majority of brands' current diversity efforts are still too stereotypical**

This has led to the increased appearance of brand boycotts, particularly among the TikTok user community, led by people of color.



Younger generations overwhelmingly care about brand reputation and want brands to align with their values.

| | TRADITIONAL VALUE PROPOSITIONS | | | | | MORAL VALUE & REPUTATION | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| | High-quality products | A retailer/brand I can trust | Superior customer service | Has physical stores and a websites | High cleanliness and sanitation standards that are enforced | Treats its employees equitably | Retailer/brand values align with my own | Known for its sustainable practices | Actively supports causes/social issues |
| Generation Z | 84 | 79 | 80 | 98 | 90 | 117 | 100 | 113 | 144 |
| Millennials | 88 | 77 | 91 | 86 | 97 | 117 | 115 | 133 | 150 |
| Generation X | 106 | 103 | 100 | 105 | 103 | 97 | 119 | 96 | 94 |
| Baby Boomers | 115 | 130 | 116 | 109 | 105 | 79 | 74 | 58 | 44 |

The challenge

How can I develop my marketing to properly **engage with consumers who are hesitant to trust me?**

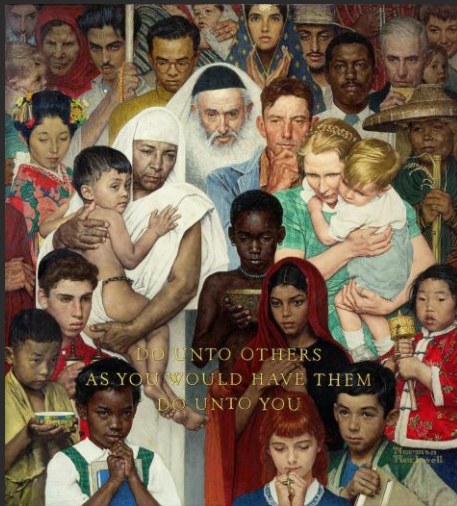
The cost of inaction

You would risk losing an annual purchasing power of over \$1 trillion. **Falling behind isn't an option when your competitors are already moving forward.**





“lifecommunity”
-Ernesto Neto, 2022



“Golden Rule”
-Norman Rockwell, 1961



**“I’d Like to Teach
the World to Sing”
('Hilltop' Ad)**
-Coca-Cola, 1971

”

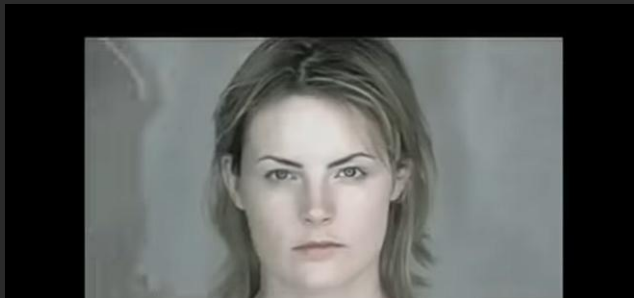
“A human being is part of the whole called by us ‘universe’ – a part limited in time and space. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.” -Albert Einstein

As many brands avoid conflict by pulling away,

a select few leading brands will outshine the rest by sticking true to their values and positioning themselves as understanding partners in the human experience.



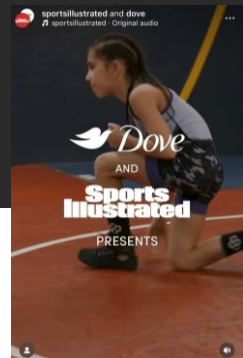
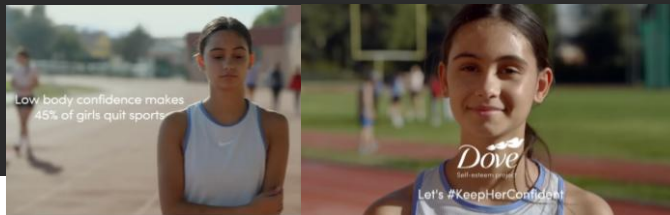
Dove has been positioning itself as an advocate for real, unfiltered, multicultural beauty for at least a decade



No wonder our perception
of beauty is distorted.

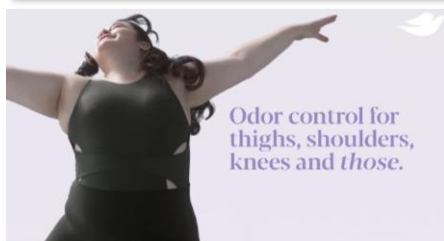
Dove makes its commitment to elevating women's stories very clear

Brings attention to the pressures on body image for girls in sports, and pledges to #KeepHerConfident



Partnered with Sports Illustrated to create "Sports Reillustrated," a campaign celebrating girls with disabilities in sports

Celebrates all body types and body positivity as a concept in several paid and owned campaigns



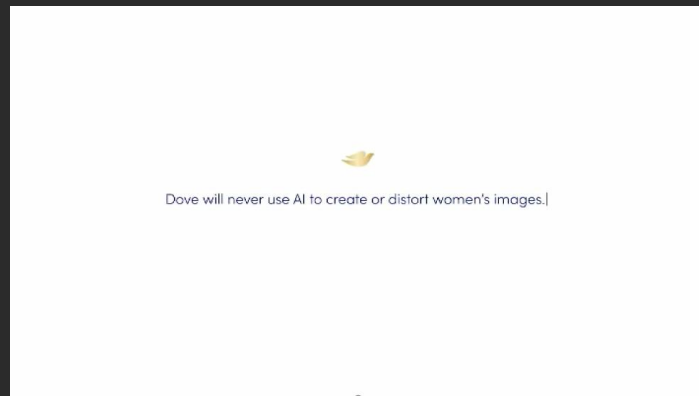
Introduced a campaign that recognizes its devoted women customers of all different ages, sizes, and skin colors

SoFi and Dove both pledged to “change” stereotypes in their respective industries

- Timely challenges of stereotypes inherent in Artificial Intelligence
- True extensions of elements of each brand’s core values, to build women up in terms of their financial confidence (SoFi) and body image (Dove)



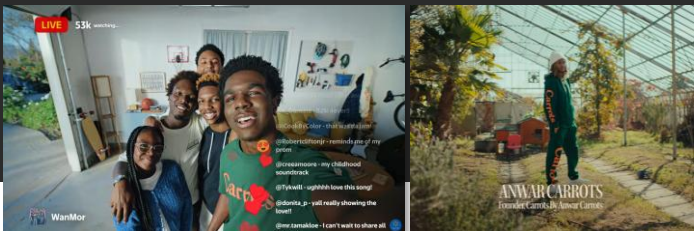
“Changing the face of finance”



“20 years changing beauty”

Other brands took an empowerment approach in recent marketing

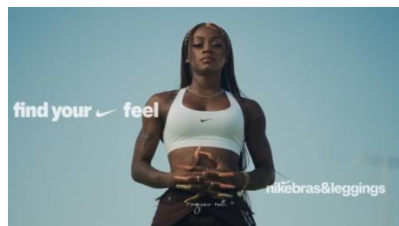
Walmart spotlighted Black-owned brands, with an introductory spot and follow-ups with specific voiceovers from business owners



P&G's "The Name" campaign follows a Korean girl as she learns to embody her name's meaning of strength and resilience



Athleta introduced the Power of She campaign with the tagline "hearing yourself over the crowd and landing in your power"



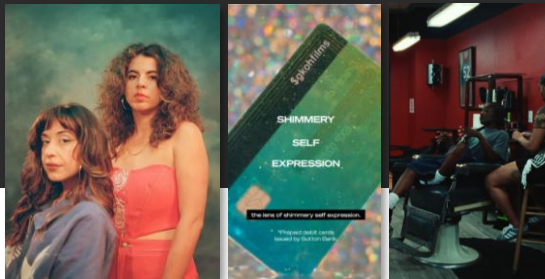
Nike made waves in the 2025 Super Bowl with its "You Can't Win. So Win." campaign that condemns gender stereotypes

In particular, Cash App and Coach are using a combination of color, sound, and specific cultural experiences to evoke inclusivity and empathy in their branding



Brands have succeeded with Gen Z through emotion and themes around self-expression

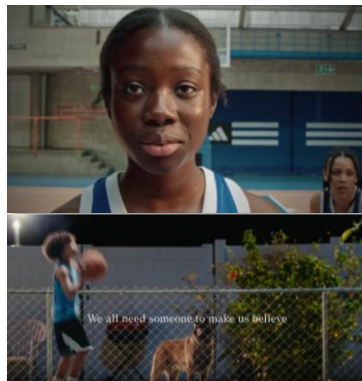
Cash App homes in on the aesthetic appeal of its cards and consistently celebrates successful minority women



Poppi leverages timely Gen Z terminology and portrays a diverse array of Gen Z women in relatable scenarios



Coach encapsulates the emotions young people feel during specific relatable scenarios, and layers its spots in eye-catching colors



Adidas celebrates youth athletes and portrays their emotions; it also introduced a Creators Club

CALLING ALL CREATORS
15% OFF YOUR FIRST ORDER + FREE SHIPPING.

Join the Creators Club, a membership program for true creators. Rack up rewards as you rise through the ranks for early access to product drops, invites to special events and to unlock the best of adidas.

The aesthetic of Gen Z-targeted ads stands in stark contrast to mass media

- Pastel and/or bright colors, sparkles, and an overlay of haze or quality of dreaminess
- Y2K is apparent, with fashion choices like newsboy hats, rectangular glasses, large hair pins / barettes, & capri pants
- Show people with their own personal styles



Sustainability campaigns should stay away from hard-to-digest, far-away initiatives

- Lead with the primary claim of quality, and follow up with commitments to sustainability that are understandable and current
- Be educational & specific, and make individual actions more palatable for consumers



"Recycle Me"



"Have Taste, Love Waste"

Delta Air Lines
August 24 at 7:04 AM · 🌐

Sustainable aviation fuel is the most promising lever known today to decarbonize aviation, but there is not enough SAF available today to fuel commercial aviation for more than one week. That's why Delta is taking action now to secure a more sustainable future – leading efforts to bring together farmers, policymakers, and stakeholders across the value chain to increase access to this groundbreaking technology.

A Delta Air Lines aircraft is shown in flight, with its distinctive blue and red tail fin visible. The aircraft is flying over a field with other planes on the ground.

NEWS.DELTA.COM
Delta Advocates for Sustainable Aviation Fuel [LEARN MORE](#)

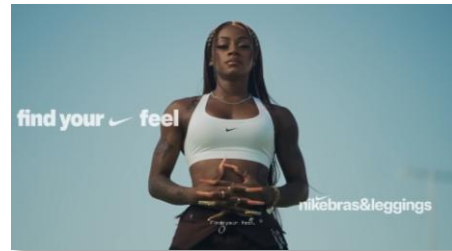
Sustainable Aviation Fuel

So what can you do
to better resonate
with people's emotions
and values?

TACTIC #1

Prioritize themes around belonging

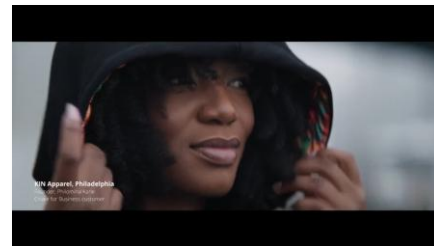
Know your audience, and how diverse it is. If you want to expand your customer base and stay relevant with young people in particular, you have to make sure every type of person is **included in your product development and promotional strategies**. Explore themes around how self-expression can foster human connection.



TACTIC #2

Let the people speak

Do not assume what consumers want; involve them in your decisions. Leverage agile primary research, let influencers help create your content, and feature business owner stories that show their **specific thoughts and feelings** through voiceovers.



TACTIC #3

Connect people together...

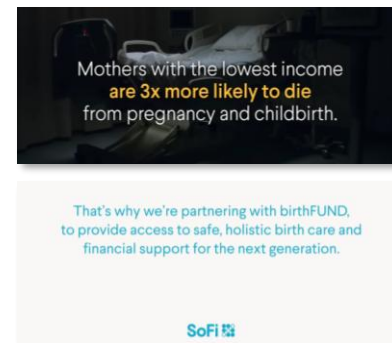
...by embedding human experiences and emotions into your creative. **Decide what type of emotion(s) you want viewers to feel**, and make sure it shines through in your storyline, imagery, colors, sounds, and actor/influencer portrayals.



TACTIC #4

Be bold

Don't be afraid to push boundaries; Gen Z consumers in particular *want* boundaries to be pushed. **Be bold, weird, aesthetically appealing, and identity-centric.** Examine how to leverage playfulness and/or vulnerability.



TACTIC #5

Embrace the intersectional

Tap into broad-reaching messages by incorporating stories about people who fall into **multiple identity categories**. Accurately portray specific cultural experiences others would be very familiar with. In sustainability messaging, **pair this value-add** with other value propositions inherent to the product.



Now, let's chat...

Q&A



Thank you!

Your Empathy-Epitomizing Expert

Ella is inspired by diverse ideologies, methodologies, and psychologies. She seeks to shine a light on brand strategies that can make a difference in society, particularly in terms of their ability to shape perspectives.

Her work, along with all of the work from the experts on the Mintel Consulting team, can help your brand be cutting-edge, both now and in the future.

Ella Schindler
Associate Principal Consultant