

Pixability's CEO Shares New Cause-Related Marketing Research: Why Brands Shouldn't Be Afraid to Take a Stand

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Cause-related ads seem to be everywhere. There's much industry debate about what works, what doesn't, and whether it's even worth the risk. Bettina Hein, CEO of Pixability, shares quantitative research her company has done behind this trend and why brands shouldn't shy away.

Are you more likely to buy from a company that aligns with your values? Do you avoid using products from companies you despise? For me as a consumer, the answer is "yes." For me as a marketer, this "yes" is frightening—it can spell boom or doom for brands. Do we as marketers need to play it safe so we don't offend anyone?

I advocate for a resounding "no," and I have the data to prove it.

There's been a lot of buzz in the industry—and within pop culture—about brands creating purpose-driven marketing. Even [Saturday Night Live](#) has picked up on it. But is there truly an uptick in these kinds of ads? Or is it just that people notice them more than ever? And most importantly, are they effective?

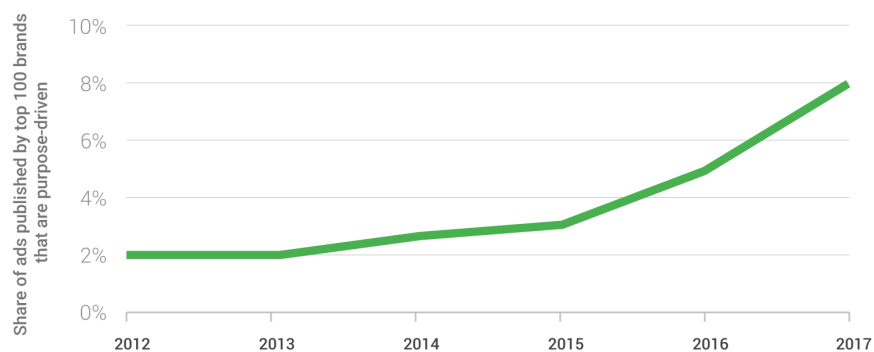
think with 

I founded [Pixability](#) with a mindset that through insights based on data, we could help brands succeed with video. So whenever I hear about a new trend, I turn to data for answers. We partnered with Google to take a data-driven look into cause marketing ads on YouTube.

Purpose-driven marketing is on the rise

The data shows what many feel in their gut to be true: brands are indeed creating more cause-related ads. Among the top 100 brands, cause-related ads on YouTube have grown 4X over the past 5 years.¹

Growth of Cause-Related Ads Among the Top 100 Brands

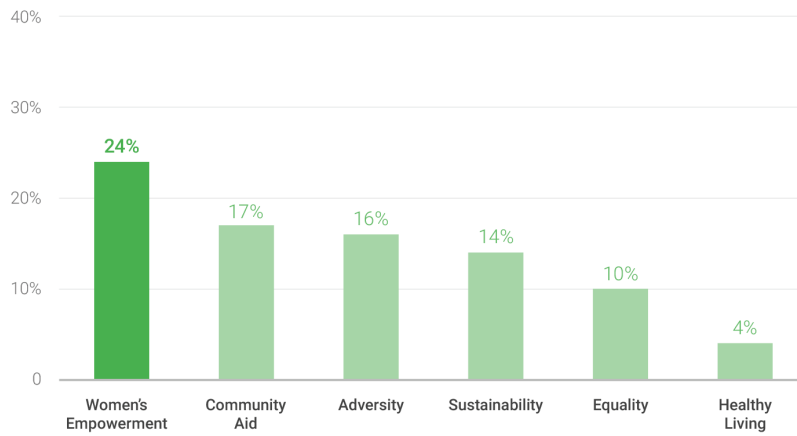


Source: Pixability, June 2017. Pixability's proprietary software harvests data from these channels through the YouTube Insights API. Top brands defined by Interbrand's 2016 list of top 100 global brands.

Brands are tackling a wide variety of issues, ranging from safe driving to equality and healthy living, but there are certainly a few issues that brands seem to gravitate toward more than others.

Over the past year, among all cause-related videos created by the top 100 brands, women's empowerment took the cake. In fact, 24% of the top 100 brands' purpose-driven videos were about women's empowerment.² From Nike to P&G, brands are finding a way to create empowering ads for women that don't just [generate impressions, but leave them](#).

Most-Published Causes Among Videos of Top 100 Brands

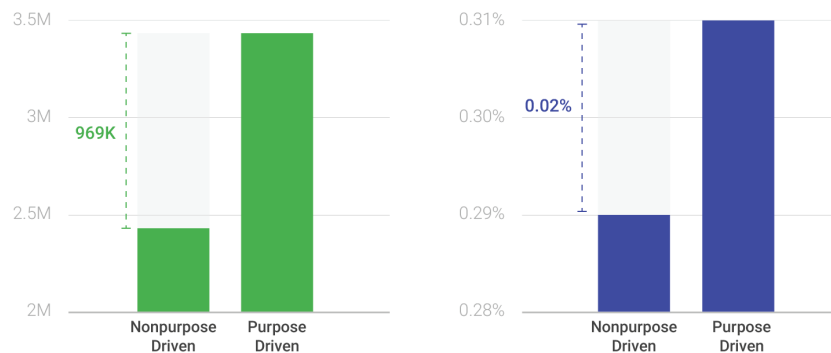


Source: Pixability, June 2017.

Cause-related ads drive higher views and engagement rates

As marketers, we care about the results. These ads are growing in volume—great. But how are they performing? For this study, we compared purpose-driven ads to nonpurpose-driven ads, and what we found was that not only do purpose-driven ads garner more views, they also drive more results in the form of engagement rate.³

Average Views + Engagement Rate: Purpose-Driven and Nonpurpose-Driven Ads



Source: Pixability, June 2017. *Engagement = Sum of likes, dislikes, comments and Facebook shares.

Since YouTube is a place where people feel free to express themselves, organic communities exist around causes already. So it follows that cause-related videos garner more attention.

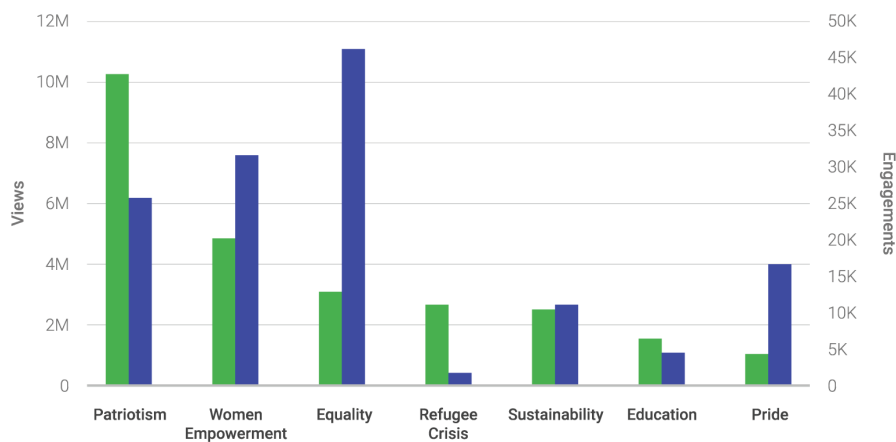
How cause-related ads resonate by topic

Some causes have extremely broad “motherhood and apple pie” appeal while others shine a light on issues that affect a smaller number of people.

Are brands better off speaking out on topics that touch a broad segment of the population, or concentrating efforts on something more niche? There’s no one-size-fits-all answer to this. Again, I turn to the data.

We looked at the number of views for particular causes and compared that with the causes’ respective engagement on YouTube. Take patriotism for example: Patriotic ads attract the majority of purpose-driven ad views, but the cause that generates the highest engagement rate is equality.

Video Performance by Social Cause



Source: Pixability, June 2017. *Engagement = Sum of likes, dislikes, comments and Facebook shares.

How to take a stand in a way that works for your brand

Choose a cause that fits your values. You can't bandwagon on an issue and expect success—the potential for backlash is real. What's most important is that your [brand can truly own the cause marketing](#) campaigns you tackle.

Be timely. Seizing an opportunistic moment can amplify your effort and achieve high audience engagement. For example, [Apple's rapid reaction](#) to the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord garnered attention with simple storytelling. This not only spoke of the company's conviction, but used a central feature of their product—pictures shot on an iPhone—to drive home a point.

Accept that taking a stand is a risk. Some people may not agree with your message. If taking a stand feels scary, take heart: communities on YouTube and other social media sites will show compassion if you make missteps but are contrite and genuine.

When purpose-driven ads are done well, brands have the opportunity to not only stand for something they believe in, but also deeply connect with an audience. I believe this will become an increasingly important method to build brands at a time when people are increasingly choosing brands that align with their values.

Bettina Hein
CEO, Pixability



Sources

1-3 Pixability, "Purpose Driven Marketing" Research. Top 100 brands defined by Interbrand's 2016 list of top 100 global brands. June 2017. *Engagement = Sum of likes, dislikes, comments and Facebook shares