

# Consumers as brand activists

By [Michael Baretta](#)

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There is no denying that there is a massive trend towards being more socially conscious; consumers are increasingly defining themselves through the brands that they buy.



People feel proud to support brands that care about their communities, employees and the planet. When people feel proud to be associated with a brand, they morph from just being consumers to being brand activists - and this makes doing good really good for business.

Creativity in marketing drives brand growth - companies these days need to be more innovative and engaging in order to stand out and be noticed in our constantly connected and over-stimulated world.

Generally, 'doing good' is the job for your Corporate Social Investment (CSI) department. These days, however, there are highly innovative ways to marry marketing and CSI in such a way that you are not only creating sustainable change, but also creating real value for

your company.

This value is created in terms of earning B-BBEE points, driving sales, building your brand and marketing your service or product - to name just a few.

Here are five trends that we at [dot]GOOD believe will become increasingly prevalent in South Africa in the years to come:

- 1. Impact Matters:** There is a global trend towards sustainability. Giving back is not simply about giving, but rather about creating sustainable change - making a tangible impact on the community. Combining your marketing and CSI efforts pools resources and creates a sustainable change in the community you wish to support while creating real value for your company.
- 2. Family Matters:** When considering a marketing and CSI campaign, think no further than the immediate beneficiary - ask how the initiative can extend to their family.
- 3. Community Matters:** Always look for strategies and activities that will have a positive, sustainable impact on the broader community.
- 4. Connectivity Matters:** Companies need to embrace marketing strategies that are focused on two-way communication. It is vital to connect with your customers and beneficiaries on a human level - today's beneficiaries could be tomorrow's consumers. Also important is that you involve and inform your stakeholders of what you are doing in the community - this includes staff, consumers, clients and the media.
- 5. Context Matters:** In a world where consumers are bombarded with hundreds - if not thousands - of messages every day, it's important to consider when, where and how your message is being delivered. How can you deliver your message in such a way that it stands out, encourages personal interaction and aligns to your brand's voice?

A recent example of socially conscious, smart marketing is a project that we undertook in partnership with the Imvula Education Empowerment Fund, a 100% black-owned broad-based trust that facilitates the education of promising underprivileged youth at the fund's Maharishi Institute.

We selected and trained a group of students to participate in a long-term, volume driving campaign to promote the full range of Tastic products and build long-term relationships with its consumers.

The collaboration constitutes a virtuous circle: practical training was provided to the students in a real-world situation, while at the same time, giving Tastic products a sustainable and financially advantageous brand-building solution - a great example of a true win-win situation.

The umbrella campaign gave the Tastic brand an opportunity to comply with B-BBEE requirements and reach sales objectives, contributing to the learning and skills of the participating Maharishi students at the same time.

## ABOUT MICHAEL BARETTA

Michael Baretta is an experienced creative thinker who is deeply committed to changing the world for the better through innovative marketing and communications. Baretta is the founder of [dot]GOOD, South Africa's first and foremost for-good marketing agency.

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