



DEVELOPING YOUR MARKETING MINDSET

BONUS CHAPTER

Leora Halpern Lanz

Marketing with Meaning:

The Business Case for Wellness, Sustainability & Community

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This bonus chapter is a companion to *Developing Your Marketing Mindset: Real-World Lessons from Hospitality* by Leora Halpern Lanz ©2025.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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INTRODUCTION

Today, consumers no longer “settle” for products or services alone; they expect brands to stand for something “bigger.” Research shows that 64% of consumers choose, switch, or boycott a brand based on its stance on societal issues, and nearly 80% say they are more likely to buy from companies that actively support their communities (Edelman, 2023; Cone/Porter Novelli, 2022). This chapter offers the evidence that marketing focused on wellness, sustainability and community engagement resonates emotionally and drives real business growth. This additional information, a supplement to *Developing Your Marketing Mindset: Real-World Lessons from Hospitality*, is intended to educate and inspire. While the book draws on professional experience and memorable case studies to illustrate how marketing can be both strategic and empathetic, this additional insight showcases the data behind those stories. The research is there, and it reinforces that marketing social impact isn’t just good practice, it’s good business.

Whether you're a hotelier, restaurateur, or marketer from any other industry, the findings and takeaways here are meant to validate and further empower the mindset shift toward marketing that’s rooted in purpose and accountability. Experience is powerful, and so is evidence. This chapter highlights the latter.

There is real, recent proof that wellness, sustainability, and community engagement drive sales, loyalty, and pricing power. The missing link is *authentic, visible marketing*. If operations do the work but marketing hides it, the value is lost.

Data shows that purpose is not just a moral imperative -- it’s a financial advantage. Brands that clearly communicate their commitments to wellness, sustainability, and community engagement win trust and spending power across all generations. This is why marketing must do more than sell features — it must surface purpose. When done well, purpose does equal profit.

Marketing that Connects: Why Wellness, Sustainability & Community Drive Loyalty and Profits

Cross-Industry Relevance: A Marketing Mandate

No matter your industry — hospitality, insurance, senior living, retail, or any other — customers today crave meaning. They seek connection with the brands they choose. And more than ever, that connection is fostered through authentic expressions of care: for people, place (and the community), and for the planet. For example:

Senior Living: Facilities that highlight purpose-driven design (light, air, materials), local community engagement, and wellness-focused programming stand out in a competitive market.

Insurance: Policies that promote health education tools, mental wellness support, or green policy discounts builds deeper engagement and brand preference.

Retail: Brands that authentically share their sourcing, giveback programs, or inclusive values earn long-term customer loyalty and permission to charge premium pricing.

Marketing that communicates a company's wellness initiatives, community involvement, or sustainability efforts is no longer just "feel-good" storytelling. It's good business. When companies surface these values clearly and consistently, their marketing becomes more resonant, more memorable, and more profitable (Harvard Business Review, 2023).

Now, think about your specific business vertical. Whatever you're selling or marketing, identify an authentic connection to wellness, sustainability, or community, and weave that customer benefit into your messaging. Even if the meaning is small or basic, avoid "greenwashing" or "wellness-washing." Instead, find the genuine story—and if the authenticity needs strengthening, encourage your marketing team to challenge the company to "do more good."

And for Future Consumers: A Glimpse Ahead

Generation Alpha (the first cohort born entirely in the 21st century; children born between 2010 and 2024) is on track to become the largest generational group in history, with an estimated 2.2 billion members worldwide by the end of 2024. By 2025, this generation is projected to surpass the Baby Boomers in size (D'Adamo, 2024).

In the United States alone, about 45.6 million Gen Alpha children already reflect a broader range of backgrounds than the overall U.S. population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2023), two factors contribute to this shifting composition of the population: Hispanic individuals make up nearly 19% of the total population but 26% of children, while roughly 3% of Americans identify as mixed race — a share that more than doubles to 7% among children.

Additionally, emerging research shows that Generation Alpha are growing up with sustainability as a baseline expectation, shaped by Millennial and Gen Z parents who prioritize environmental responsibility more than any previous generation (McCrindle, 2024).

For marketers, these figures are a clear signal: tomorrow's consumers will expect brands to mirror the richness of the community they see around them every day — across race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, and more (D'Adamo, 2024). The expectations for representation will raise the stakes for brands to express real commitments to community and wellbeing — not just in operations, but in every piece of marketing.

Purpose-Driven Marketing Works: Proof in the Data

According to data from MindClick's Environmental Health (EH) Index—which evaluates the health, sustainability, and social impact of product suppliers—81% of consumers say companies should be implementing environmental initiatives (MindClick, n.d.). When businesses make these efforts visible and tangible to their audiences, they achieve stronger emotional connection and measurable economic results.

In one illustrative case, Courtyard by Marriott adopted the use of sustainably sourced and wellness-enhancing furnishings, validated by the EH Index. The result? Increases in guest satisfaction, brand loyalty, and occupancy. The initiative was supported not only by operational change but by strategic marketing that told the story of those changes in a way guests could feel and appreciate (MindClick, n.d.).

This isn't unique to hospitality. From senior living facilities emphasizing health-forward design, to retailers promoting zero-waste initiatives, to insurance companies marketing their wellness platforms -- companies across sectors are realizing that expressing purpose results in profit.

An April 2023 McKinsey study shows that 40% of Americans are interested in sustainable products, but many lack the information to make confident choices. While the report focused on sustainability in financial services, one of its key findings was clear: consumers need guidance to understand which sustainability offerings best fit

their needs—and what “sustainable” really means. That education happens through clear, consistent communication. Informative marketing is essential.

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Research consistently shows that marketing a clear, authentic brand purpose, whether rooted in wellness, sustainability, or community impact, drives deeper emotional connection, stronger trust, and higher profits. Consumers actively reward brands that communicate their purpose openly and back it up with real action.

For example, a Kantar study found that brands with a strong sense of purpose grow twice as fast as those without (Kantar, 2020). Additionally, Edelman and Cone/Porter Novelli studies highlight the growing consumer preference for brands demonstrating social commitment and community support (Edelman, 2023; Cone/Porter Novelli, 2022).

NielsenIQ shopper data reinforces this impact: products with clear sustainability claims grow sales five times faster than those without (NielsenIQ, 2023). McKinsey’s wellness research shows that more than half of consumers are willing to pay more for products and services that support their wellbeing (McKinsey & Company, 2022).

If you’re a marketer, here’s what matters: purpose isn’t just something companies say — it’s what you actually communicate. When brands make wellness, sustainability, and community commitment visible and credible in their marketing, they earn more than attention; they earn loyalty, spending power, and lasting growth.

Purpose Pays Off: The Three Pillars in Action

Let’s take a look at the pillars of wellness, sustainability and community connection that *Developing your Marketing Mindset: Real-World Lessons from Hospitality* specifically highlight for more meaningful marketing:

Data shows that purpose is more than feel-good messaging — it’s a proven driver of deeper loyalty and higher profits. Brands that communicate genuine commitments to wellness, sustainability, and community investment earn greater trust, command premium prices, and outperform their peers. Here’s why each pillar matters.

Wellness: Consumers Will Pay for Wellbeing

Wellness is no longer a niche — it's a global economic force and a daily priority for consumers. According to McKinsey's *Future of Wellness* report, over 50% of global consumers now rank wellness as a top priority in their lives, and 40% say they're willing to spend more on products and services that help them achieve it (McKinsey, 2022).

The *Global Wellness Institute* projects the global wellness economy will surge from \$5.6 trillion in 2022 to **\$8.5 trillion by 2027*, outpacing global GDP growth (GWI, 2023). Retail data backs this up: wellness-positioned products consistently outperform conventional categories — with food, beverage, and beauty segments showing double-digit growth compared to flat or declining category averages (NielsenIQ, 2023).

Marketing that surfaces wellness benefits — better sleep, mental health support, healthy spaces — earns attention, trust, and spending power. This includes marketing internally, to your own employees and associates.

Hilton: Thrive at Hilton – A Commitment to Wellness

Hilton's *Thrive at Hilton* initiative is a comprehensive wellness program designed to support the physical, mental, and financial well-being of its nearly 500,000 team members worldwide. This program encompasses a range of benefits, including the *Thrive Sabbatical* and *Thrive Reset* programs, which provide paid time off and grants to employees pursuing personal passions, self-care, or professional development. In 2024, over 1,200 team members applied for these programs, with 20 selected to embark on journeys that align with Hilton's core values (Hilton, n.d.).

In addition to these programs, Hilton has expanded its support through the *Care for All* platform, which offers resources for team members managing caregiving responsibilities. This platform includes access to caregiving concierge services, manager training resources, and a comprehensive hub providing articles, podcasts, and online courses on various caregiving topics (Hilton, 2023).

Hilton's commitment to wellness extends to mental health support, with the company launching new global mental well-being learning resources in 2023. These resources aim to destigmatize mental wellness in the workplace and provide team members with tools to manage stress, burnout, and other challenges (Hilton, 2023).

Through these initiatives, Hilton demonstrates how investing in employee wellness not only enhances team member satisfaction but also fosters a culture of care that benefits both employees and guests.

Sustainability: Green Commitments Drive Green Revenue

Consumers across generations expect brands to take sustainability seriously — and reward them for doing so. NielsenIQ (2023) reports that 78% of U.S. shoppers say a sustainable lifestyle is important, and 66% are willing to pay more for brands that prioritize sustainability.

The *First Insight & Wharton* study found Gen Z shoppers in particular are leading the charge: 75% say sustainability drives their buying decisions, and they'll pay up to 10% more for sustainable alternatives (First Insight & Wharton, 2022). IBM research reinforces this — showing that purpose-driven consumers now make up over 40% of shoppers, spending more than twice as much on average (IBM & NRF, 2022).

Sustainable practices only add value when they're visible — marketing must make the story clear, credible, and consistent.

BCG's 2022 study also confirms that most consumers are ready to embrace sustainable products, but many remain uncertain about what a "sustainable lifestyle" really means, or hesitate to pay a premium for it. The report urges CEOs, CMOs, and CSOs (chief Sustainability officers) to understand the barriers that hold people back and the motivators that move them forward. In BCG's words: it's vital to "speak the language that will best resonate with consumers." This is where clear, purposeful messaging makes the difference - transforming sustainability from a promise into a practice that consumers trust and choose.

This is communication. This is marketing's message.

A powerful example of this in action comes from Accor, which shows how transparent sustainability practices, amplified through marketing, drive both guest trust and behavior change:

Accor: Making Sustainability Visible for Guests

Accor, one of the world's largest hospitality groups, demonstrates how marketing sustainability can drive guest trust and influence behavior. In collaboration with Booking.com and researchers at the University of Surrey, a recent study found that 87% of travelers consider sustainable travel important, and around two-thirds say they are more likely to adopt eco-friendly habits when hotels clearly communicate specific actions they can take (Accor, Booking.com, & University of Surrey, 2023). Searches for "sustainable hotel" have grown by 28% year-over-year, and approximately one in five travelers are willing to pay more for verified carbon-neutral stays. By eliminating single-use

plastics and requiring all properties to pursue third-party sustainability certifications, Accor shows that transparent sustainability messaging—supported by meaningful operational action—builds brand preference and pricing power.

Community Engagement: Local Impact Builds Loyal Customers

People want to see brands stand for something beyond profit — especially when it comes to supporting local communities. The *Edelman Trust Barometer* (2023) found that **71% of consumers** trust brands more when they see them invest in local communities, and **60%** expect brands to take a stand on social or community issues.

According to the *Cone/Porter Novelli Purpose Study* (2022), nearly 80% of Americans say they're more likely to buy from companies that actively support their communities — and two-thirds say they'd switch to a competitor that aligns more closely with their social values.

From local partnerships to employee volunteering, community stories belong in the spotlight. Marketing is the bridge that makes those stories meaningful to customers. For example:

Starbucks: Brewing Community Connection Through Local Engagement

Starbucks has long positioned community engagement as a core part of its brand identity, exemplified through its *Community Store* program. These stores partner with local nonprofits and initiatives in underserved neighborhoods, committing a portion of their profits to support community development and social equity. Starbucks dedicates 5% of net sales from each Community Store to local causes, creating visible and meaningful impact on economic development, education, and health in those areas (Starbucks, 2019).

Consumer response reflects strong brand loyalty: a 2021 Starbucks survey found that 74% of customers felt more loyal to Starbucks because of its community initiatives (ConnectPOS, 2025).

Starbucks integrates community stories across digital, in-store, and social media marketing, making its purpose-driven efforts highly visible and relatable to consumers who increasingly seek brands with authentic social values (Digital Scholar, 2024).

By making community engagement a marketing centerpiece rather than a side note, Starbucks builds emotional connection, brand trust, and drives purchasing decisions.

Best Practices for Purpose-Driven Messaging

1. Surface the Good You're Already Doing. Don't hide community or wellness programs in CSR reports. Make them marketing centerpieces.
2. Use Data and Impact Metrics. Quantify your efforts. Share the percentage of sustainable products, wellness outcomes, or hours volunteered.
3. Tell the Human Story. Highlight real people—customers, staff, or community members—whose lives are better because of your initiatives.
4. Stay Consistent. One-off campaigns don't build trust. Integrate these themes into your ongoing marketing strategy.

Purpose is the New Positioning

Whether you're a boutique hotel, a national insurer, or a local grocer, your marketing will resonate more deeply when it expresses values that speaks to your audience. Sustainability, wellness, and community aren't distractions from your core message -- they are your core message.

Purpose-driven marketing is a strategic imperative that fuels loyalty, pricing power, and competitive advantage. It has become a baseline expectation for today's consumer. The data is clear: brands that authentically communicate their commitments connect with the hearts and wallets of current and future consumers.

How will your brand surface its purpose today?

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Thank you for reading these insights. We invite you to continue the conversation and follow our work online:

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We hope this additional information brings further perspective and value to your marketing journey. And always remember the hospitality.