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## Earth Day Marketing May Be More Important Than Ever

"I can't think of a better time to have an answer to a very difficult question. Why is my brand essential? That's the lens upon which all your communications should shine."

By **Kaley Roshitsh** on April 15, 2020



Many wonder how Earth Day marketing messages will pivot during the pandemic. Courtesy

Like two peas in a pod, disease outbreaks and natural disasters occur as a consequence of a changing climate. One could even say the upcoming 50th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22 against the backdrop of a pandemic is perfect illustrative timing.

Mother Nature is clashing her cymbals as a lot of commercial activity in the U.S. and Europe falls silent. Even Earth Day, the world's largest environmental movement based in Washington, D.C., is being forced to go digital with its conference, called "24 Hours of Action."



“While these uncertain times have put some of our adventures on hold, our fans still count on us to inspire and uplift them,” Erika Gabrielli, senior director of marketing at Teva, told WWD.

Teva, which this spring converted all of its “iconic” webbings to recycled content, is leaning into custom content and a **sustainability** sweepstakes to re-educate consumers on how they can help to decrease their impact on the planet.

At the same time, it’s providing a reminder of why they matter to their customers, which for the brand is most palpable in the sales uptick in its sandals, hiking styles and — naturally — house slippers.

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Ryan Jordan, executive creative director at marketing and communications firm Imre, who has worked on projects for brands such as Under Armour, L’Oréal and Target, among others, believes the messaging stakes are even higher this Earth Day.

“Listen harder and better than you ever have,” he said. “It’s actually the same advice I would have given to brands three months ago, but it’s now more important than ever.”

Listening right now may be as simple as a company showing its compassion, reminding customers that they stand by their employees and aim to help them weather the hardships of the crisis to the best of their abilities.

While he doesn’t believe brands should outright cancel initiatives, especially if they’re really an “awesome game-changer” (although every brand may be biased to think so), he still calls for a rethink.

“I challenge you to do this; ask your target audience what they think. Get them involved in the execution,” said Jordan, adding “actual proof of empathy is not only the right thing to do, it’s good business.”



executive officer and founder of online thrift start-up Goodfair.

Although luxury consignment, rental and resale businesses are **dealing with their own set of challenges amid the coronavirus pandemic**, Goodfair is seeing booming sales among its predominantly Millennial and Gen Z audience.

The company pulled in \$300,000 in sales on Easter Sunday, according to Luciani. What he attributes it to is not simply a shift in consumer behavior but speaking Internet.

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At least for his company, “meme culture is what wins,” said Luciani, who credits the steep sales day to a viral TikTok from the company’s account. “If a brand is not on TikTok, they’re sleeping,” he added. With more than 1 billion users, TikTok has already seen the entry of heritage brands like Ralph Lauren and the christening of Fenty Beauty’s TikTok creative house in March.

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**Bundles offered by Goodfair, with a largely Millennial and Gen Z customer base. Courtesy**

Start-ups like Goodfair may be more willing to front the risk and wrestle with the Internet. It offers various thrift bundles on its web site like the “cure corona bundle” retailing for \$48 or the “tree hugger



and exercise in marketing — continue to pass by consumers' eyes without them evaluating into the respective supply chains?

It depends, but they're not always too good to be true in the case that brand values actually match up, according to Brendan Synnott, chief executive officer of organic essentials brand Pact.

Calling on a simple recipe of a few star ingredients, a successful capsule collection should mean: sharing the same long-term values and "working with partners that are 100 percent committed to sustainability in everything that they do. It can't be just 5 percent of your product line," Synnott said.

That also means shying away from greenwashing or "fakers," as Synnott puts it.

Pact is pairing with Brooklyn-based label Zero Waste Daniel to release 100-percent organic Fair Trade-certified hoodies and sweat shorts for spring adorned with handmade, upcycled patches by designer Daniel Silverstein.

As with others, the company is broadening its approach, extending Earth Day festivities into a monthlong celebration and more importantly shifting the focus from product to engaging content — showcasing the brand alongside others in the sustainability space.

Doing so virtually is as simple as inviting like-minded sustainability thought-leaders to a joint Instagram Live broadcast, to the detriment of those with their notifications on. Virtual sustainability forums are another trending pursuit among brands small and large.

"As we are in a time of crisis, it's important to show some of the more positive moments that we can all cling to for a smile," reiterated Synnott.

Upbeat messaging is important in any case. U.S. unemployment benefits are sought by some 17 million workers who filed for it over the last few weeks, according to the Labor Department, and Coresight Research's latest weekly U.S. consumer survey published last Wednesday showed a bleak outlook in discretionary shopping.

So this Earth Day, as they sit in lockdown wondering whether anything will ever be the same and spend time evaluating what is essential in their lives, will consumers be looking at the messaging around the 50th anniversary — or the core values of the brands themselves?

Jordan put it bluntly: "I can't think of a better time to have an answer to a very difficult question. Why is my brand essential? That's the lens upon which all your communications should shine."



### Even for Sustainable Brands, It's a Matter of Survival

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