



Five Tips

for Building Brand Transparency to Attract Socially Conscious Consumers



The world of food is always being shaped by outside factors like world events, Mother Nature, price, public policy and changing consumer behavior. Today, sustainability, racial equity and fair labor have become issues of conscious consumerism that are changing purchasing behavior and brand expectations.

Becoming a socially conscious brand isn't just about putting a label or buzz words on your package. It must be a culture shift that speaks to a set of core values that your consumers understand and believe to be authentic.

The following tips were developed from the latest research in consumer behaviors and attitudes, as well as primary research conducted by Equitable Food Initiative (EFI).

#1

Understand and target socially conscious consumers

Demographics aren't the strongest indicator of socially conscious consumers and shouldn't direct marketing efforts. It is more important to begin to understand what these consumers believe and how your organization's values overlap with theirs.

A consumer sustainability survey by Hartman Group¹ indicates that the most engaged consumers see connections among environmental and social issues. In the area of environment, packaging and plastics – along with pollution, resource management and climate change – are top of mind but so is the role that agriculture plays in the environment and the use of those precious resources. On the social side, economic vulnerabilities, labor rights and social justice are the top areas of concern.

THE FACTS:

80 percent of consumers indicate that sustainability is important to some degree, with over half indicating it is extremely or very important.²

Creating shared ethical value for socially conscious consumers will not minimize the purchase power of your value shoppers. Issues that influence socially conscious consumers are similarly ranked among all shoppers, with socially conscious consumers showing stronger indicators of importance and influences on purchasing.



#2

Leverage your packaging to connect with consumers

One of the first places consumers learn about a brand is on the package. It's also the first place they judge your commitment to sustainability based on the type and amount of packaging.

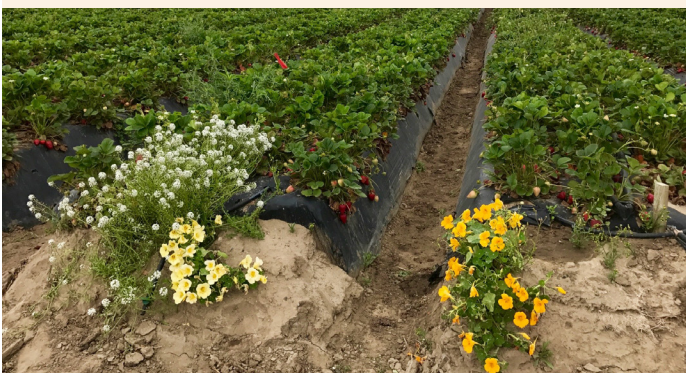
Consumers look for easy to understand claims on the front of the package, as well as clear ingredient or manufacturing information, but they also want the ability to learn more through a website, social media or QR code. Don't miss the opportunity to use your packaging to communicate your most important value. But remember that too many messages will devalue all the messages.

THE FACTS:

A Nielsen/FMI report³ notes that 79% of shoppers say they look for at least one product attribute on the front of the package that goes beyond the nutrition information and highlights a certification, claim or values-based narrative.

An EFI consumer survey⁴ shows similar results, highlighting what consumers want on packaging:

- sustainability commitments (78%)
- history, ethics and values of the company (73%)
- third-party certification labels (73%)





#3

Bring your values to life through storytelling

Cognitive research has found that information is 22 times more memorable when shared as a story rather than data. As humans we have connected and evolved for millennia around storytelling to pass on knowledge and cultural ethos.

Connect with values-driven, socially conscious shoppers through storytelling. Highlight the themes that will drive them to be brand loyal: ways your business is taking care of people and the planet. Examples include how measures protected the lake near a growing operation where the community gathers on a hot summer day; decisions that added cost to the business but improved the experience for employees or protected the environment; the people who have dedicated years to working for or with your business; the detailed processes painstakingly followed every day to bring safe and quality products to market.

THE FACTS:

When EFI asked consumers why they choose brands that are socially responsible⁴, they said:

- “We are all connected in this world and need to do our part.”
- “I want to help and be part of the solution.”
- “We need to protect the planet – it’s the only place we have.”
- “By supporting companies doing good in the world, I am ‘sponsoring’ them and helping them grow, which in turn has more good impact.”

#4

Build your online profile to reach socially conscious consumers

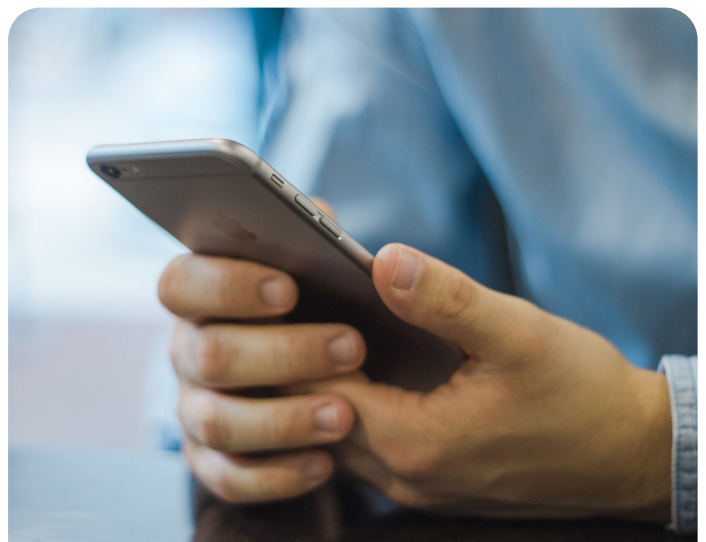
Socially conscious consumers are actively looking online for information about how a company is addressing sustainability and social issues. Beyond adding your website, social media channels and/or a QR code to your packaging, be sure to build your values-driven story online. Make it easy for visitors to your channels to see your values in action.

Be consistent in your media outreach, customer engagement and other marketing channels to concretely show the positive impacts you are having in the world.

THE FACTS:

When asked where they get their information about a brand’s social responsibility practices, socially conscious consumers said⁴:

1. Internet (61%)
2. Social Media (56%)
3. News or Media Sources (55%)
4. Company Website or its Social Media channels (55%)
5. Packaging (44%)
6. Friends and Family (44%)



#5

Develop brand advocates

Consumers are more likely to advocate and share positive news than to criticize a brand or share negative content to prevent others from buying (although the strongly socially conscious are doing that too). Identify brand advocates who love your products and arm them with tools to help tell your story. It can be as simple as regular emails to a targeted brand loyal list to give behind-the-scenes looks at your operation or as developed as bringing online influencers to your farm for a tour.

THE FACTS:

50% of socially conscious consumers say that they “always” or “often” advocate for or share content publicly to encourage others to purchase from a company or brand due to its actions or beliefs.⁴

GlobalWebIndex reports that 54% of social media users rely on the channels to research products, and 71% are likely to purchase products based on social media referrals.⁵



To learn more about Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) and the Responsibly Grown, Farmworker Assured® label, along with EFI certification for safer and healthier working conditions for farmworkers, visit equitablefood.org/label.

Sources:

1. Closing the Gap in Sustainability by Hartman Group, 2022
2. Sustainability in a Pandemic by C.O.next and Menu Matters, 2021
3. Transparency in an Evolving Omnichannel World by NielsenIQ and The Food Industry Association, 2022
4. Consumer Attitudes Toward Fresh Produce and Socially Responsible Purchasing by Equitable Food Initiative, 2021
5. GlobalWebIndex, 2018

