

The four Ps of cause marketing in 2019

 By [Sheila McGillivray](#)

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More than ever we're seeing brands align with causes and let's face it, there so many current causes to be concerned about. This means cause marketing will be bigger than ever in 2019. But millennials are growing sceptical of brands with "causes" so we'll be hearing more about "brand activism" and "social activism" instead.



Sheila McGillivray, tribe leader at One Lady & A Tribe.

As the influence and buying strength of millennials escalates, brands need to focus on authentic and individual ways to entice the consumer. Stand back Price, Product, Promotion, and Place, in 2019 there'll be a focus on the following these four Ps of cause marketing (or brand activism) Politics, Palm oil, Packaging and People. As Frédéric-Charles Petit, CEO of [Toluna](#) says; "Simply doing good is not enough; brands that wish to reach millennials through cause marketing must create a personal connection."

1. Politics

"You can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements," said Norman Douglas in the last century. This is true of some brands today and will become more so in 2019. Ben & Jerry's, for example, aren't afraid to melt into the political fray with their ice cream marketing. In 2009, they changed the name of "Chubby Hubby" to "Hubby Hubby" on the side of same-sex marriage.

Of their latest ice cream flavour, 'Pecan Resist', co-founder Ben Cohen says, "We wanted to do our part to check

President Trump's unrestrained power and send progressive champions to Congress who will really fight for working people and not just blow smoke.”

In South Africa, Nando's has always been bold with mixing marketing and politics and their big #MoreSAFlavour ad is so good (and ironic, given its big-budget feel) it deserves its own PhD. It's also worth noting Nando's is strongly positioning their campaigns on [social media](#).



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On Twitter, the #MoreSAFlavour campaign received 1,182 861 organic impressions in its first week. On Facebook, 445,010 organic views in its first week. This is where the young consumers are, not watching M-Net or SABC.

2. Palm oil

Many Halloween posts on social media were a little different this year, with the #PalmOilFree hashtag emerging as growing brand activism, or in the case of products like Kit-Kat, *anti-brand* activism. Fast forward to the #NoPalmOilChristmas campaign, spearheaded by UK retailer Iceland.

Their Christmas advert (voice-over by Emma Thompson) is so cause-driven, it's been [banned](#) by UK TV regulators. It already has over 3.7 million views on YouTube and the comments section support is telling, as one viewer, Stella Stoli writes, “All power to you Iceland, let's hope this one goes viral.”

Brands or retailers who manage to align with #PalmOilFree by finding alternative ingredients/suppliers will be ahead of the game in 2019. But it isn't going to be easy – the scope of products with palm oil in is problematic. From shampoo to chocolate to snacks, it's used in about half of all supermarket products.

But the environmental statistics are more concerning. In the past 16 years, the palm oil sourcing has led to the death of an [estimated](#) 100,000 orangutans as well as other animals. Add to that the [massive impact](#) on rainforests and their indigenous people (palm oil production is said to have been responsible for [about 8%](#) of the world's deforestation between 1990 and 2008) this is a very big deal indeed.

3. Packaging

Packaging is changing and 2019's going to see major things happening as brands align with eco-friendly options. Take the L'Oréal-funded startup [Seed Phytonutrients](#) as a recent example. Their products are packaged in bottles made out of paper and clay, their website pop-up encourages people to "join the movement" – other retailers take heed.

The definition of "phytochemicals" is "chemical compounds produced by plants, generally to help them thrive or *thwart competitors*" which is what L'Oréal plans to do. Likewise in South Africa, The Body Shop partnered with the local brand [Lush](#) to create a more organic, eco-friendly offering.



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Retailer brands specialist, Clay Dockery says eco-friendly packaging has to serve two needs: product protection and true environmental benefit, "While the packaging does cost more than conventional packaging, this is a huge opportunity within private brands given that you can offer differentiated and improved packaging while just managing a slight narrowing of price gap to national brands."

So, while we're not suggesting 2019 will see major brands turntables and become plastic-free, they will make inroads towards with more sustainable offerings. Check out [Package Free Shop](#) for a taste of the future of retail sales and packaging.

4. People

Where to start with people and cause marketing? Probably with the question, "Why can't we just all get along?" In marketing terms, we'll be awash with corporate activism opportunities for brands wanting to make a stand and to stand out. Examples include community issues (including anti-bullying), safety, equality, diversity, inclusivity, gender issues (including the #MeToo movement and #LGBTQ rights) education, health and wellness, disaster relief and the plight of refugees.

There are interesting times ahead and there's power to be wielded by responsible, committed brands, who they align themselves with and how they advertise. Just have a look at these [fifty-six companies](#) (including Lyft, Coca-Cola, Levi's and Airbnb) who stand in support of the transgender community in the US. In the words of John F. Kennedy, 2019 is going to be a year where "One person can make a difference and everyone should try."

ABOUT SHEILA MCGILLIVRAY

Sheila McGillivray's knowledge of the advertising industry spans four decades. Sheila's energy, enthusiasm and passion for her work has grown with every new position and challenge. Her experience in the industry is exceeded only by her willingness to keep learning and innovating.

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