



Growth  
from  
Knowledge

# The heart-shaped brand

**Social Responsibility, Activism  
and Brand Loyalty in 2021**

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# Two new views of US consumers

Sources of insight for today



## What's Next 4 Consumers: Brand Promise

*New quarterly research series in US examining  
key issues facing marketers today*

Latest study: February 2021

## Consumer Pulse

*Ongoing research tracking reactions to the  
pandemic in attitudes and behaviors*

Latest study: March 2021




# A year like no other

*Brands facing continual challenges*



Economic collapse

The icon depicts a downward-trending line graph overlaid on a bar chart, with a gear and a circuit-like pattern below it, symbolizing economic downturn.

Pandemic fears

The icon shows a central warning triangle with an exclamation mark, surrounded by a circular network of arrows and nodes, representing a global health crisis.

Social equality unrest

The icon features a hand holding a scale of justice, symbolizing social justice and equality.

Supply chain & shopping disruption

The icon shows a person silhouette, a gear, and a shopping bag, representing the impact of supply chain issues on consumer shopping.

2019

2020

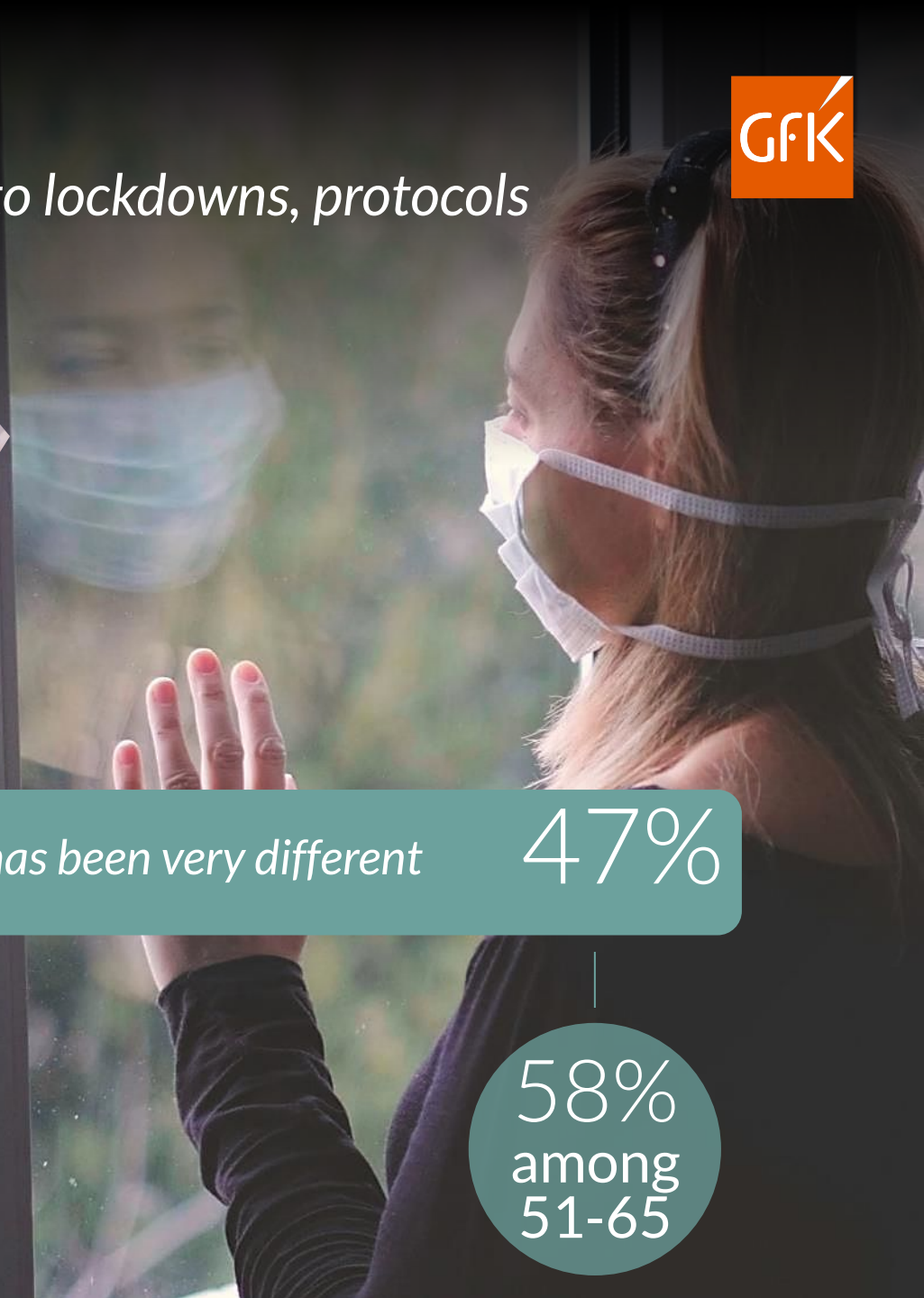
2021



# Disruption yields opportunity



*Split approaches to lockdowns, protocols*



53% *living normally as they did before*

*say life has been very different*

47%

62%  
among  
26-35

Source: Consumer Pulse - GfK

58%  
among  
51-65



# Brand loyalty in the new landscape



*Usually don't pay attention*

*Have "a lot" of favorite brands*

*Have "a few" favorites*



Source: What's Next 4 Consumers - GfK



# What consumers care about most

## The changing elements of loyalty



Safe use of my data



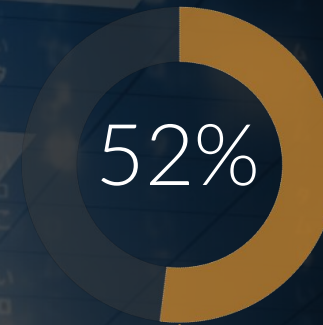
**Treating all races, genders, ethnicities equally**



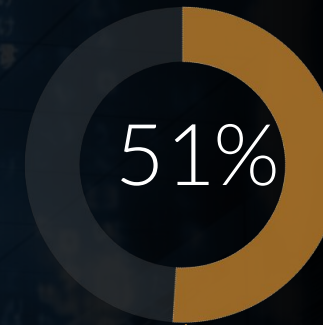
Well made/reliable



Excellent customer service



Following pandemic protocols



Helping me save money

Qualities considered **very important**

Many consumers favor activist brands

*Purpose takes on new importance ...*



**Brands should take a position on extreme social unrest (T2B)**

- Highest income (\$15K+) – 77%
- Grad/professional degree – 73%
- Men 58% vs. Women – 47%
- Ages 36-50 – 59%

*Source: What's Next  
4 Consumers – GfK*



But  
pitfalls are  
everywhere

*Consumers  
are watching –  
and reacting*



**Frequently avoid  
brands because of  
social positions**

- Highest income (\$150K+) – 59%
- Graduate/professional degree – 53%
- Men 40% vs. Women – 24%
- Ages 36-50 – 40%
- Ages 50+ – 23%

Source: What's Next  
4 Consumers – GfK



# Consider your audience before taking a stance

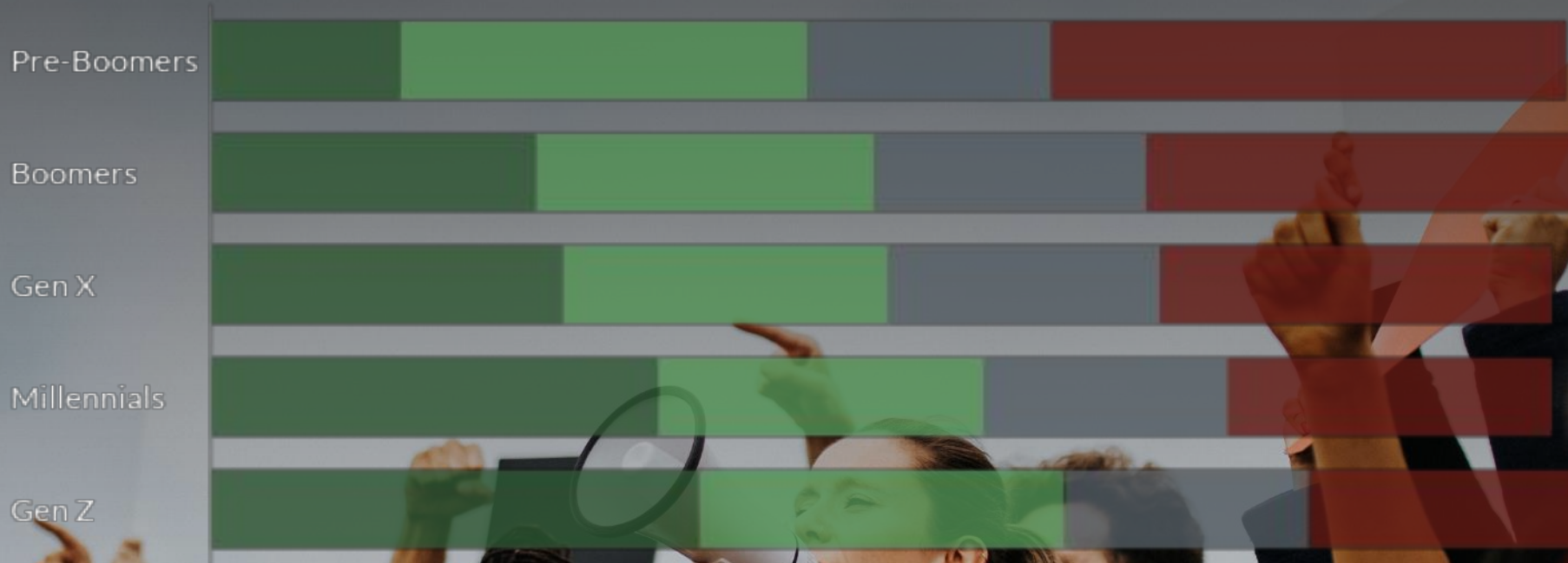


*I like it when brands **take a stand***

*Brands should **support causes but avoid controversy***

*I don't care what brands do*

*Brands should avoid **getting involved***



Source: GfK Consumer Life

# Authenticity should guide brand activism

Lead with your core values



- Joined 15% Pledge to aid black-owned businesses



- Long-term environmental focus
- Avoids divisive political stances



- Activism baked into the brand
- “Silence” campaign takes on white supremacy



# Brand activism for a new consumer world

Guidelines for a very different marketplace



Take this opportunity to innovate

Consider your audience

Focus on authenticity



Thank you!

Sign up for our second

What's Next 4 Consumers webinar:  
Rethinking Sustainability

June 24<sup>th</sup> @ 2PM Eastern

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