

2022 Brand Merchandise Trends





1. Promotional Products spending will set a record, exceeding \$26 billion.

Several signs point towards a huge resurgence in brand merchandising investment for 2022.

2021 promo spend was resurgent.

[ASI Central](#) reports 2021 promo sales of \$23.2 billion, a 12% increase over 2020's pandemic-depressed sales of \$20.7 billion. If this sales velocity repeats itself in 2022, calendar year sales will exceed \$26 billion.

General ad spending is rising.

[Dentsu](#) reports U.S. ad spending recovered in 2021, exceeding pre-pandemic levels by 12%. They forecast continued growth of 14% over last year, which would amount to \$291 billion. Promotional Products is one of the oldest and most effective forms of advertising, so a rise in general ad spend also produces a rise in promotional products reliance.

The growth of digital and hybrid engagement strategies make merchandise a more powerful tool.

Employee and customer bases are forever more dispersed than before the pandemic. Consequently, modern engagement strategies rely much more heavily on digital interactions. Since tangible merchandise impressions contrast more vividly against today's immense digital clutter, merchandise will be used more frequently to replace what used to be accomplished with in-person contact.

Because tangible merchandise impressions contrast more vividly against today's immense digital clutter, merchandise will be used more frequently to replace what used to be accomplished with in-person contact.



District Re-Tee® T-Shirt

Well-targeted merchandise experiences can express some of the sincerity and value that used to be conveyed personally. Enterprises will depend more on branded merchandise to:

- Replace some of the **tangible impressions** lost with reduced travel budgets.
- Differentiate and brand-personalize client **experiences** and offers.
- Create **more convergence** with digital content and assets.
- Add **value to registrations** for digital events.
- Enhance **attention** during remote presentations.
- Punctuate professional **milestones**.
- **Express** employee appreciation.
- Capture attention and express alignment with **top talent**.



2.

Retail brand merchandise will play a larger role in marketing strategies in 2022 and beyond.

Marketers that rely more on merchandise to break digital clutter and restore some of the tangible impressions lost in the pandemic's wake are also depending on brand names more frequently. They understand that retail brand name gifts are the most powerful and authentic tool for communicating value (and values). Marketers can tell their current and prospective targets how much they are valued using a variety of different channels. However, sending a brand-name gift conveys sincerity more directly and authentically than any email, digital ad or direct mail piece ever could.

Retail brands communicate value and values instantly and effectively.

When you value a customer, prospect, or employee enough to invest in a gift, retail brands are a way to ensure the gesture is more effective in conveying the intended value and values alignment. That's because we are all conditioned to instinctively understand brand value.

Here is an example: if given a choice of sending your best customer a jacket made by Cotopaxi, Nike, or Target, would you choose Target? If that same customer placed value in sustainability, would you prefer to send a brand like Cotopaxi; which is overtly and authentically sustainability aligned?

Brands are the most powerful tool in the world for communicating value (and values).

One prominent industry supplier's data show sales of retail brands doubled in just two years.

Given the power of retail brands to charge product experiences with more strategic value, it's no wonder marketers are using them more. Given industry fragmentation, it's hard to quantify precisely how much more. But one of the world's largest promotional products suppliers, Polyconcept North America (PCNA), corroborates the higher reliance on retail brands. Their data show best-in-class merchandise distributors doubled their consumption of retail brand name products from 2019 to 2021.



View our curated collection

of Brandable merchandise from our retail brand partners such as The North Face® and Nike®. >>>

Nike Golf Swoosh®
Legacy 91 Cap



The North Face®
Pullover Hoodie



3.

Sustainability transparency will drive more branded merchandise buying decisions.

Businesses with authentic, defined, and measurable sustainability commitments will enjoy a growing market advantage over those who don't. That includes brand merchandisers.

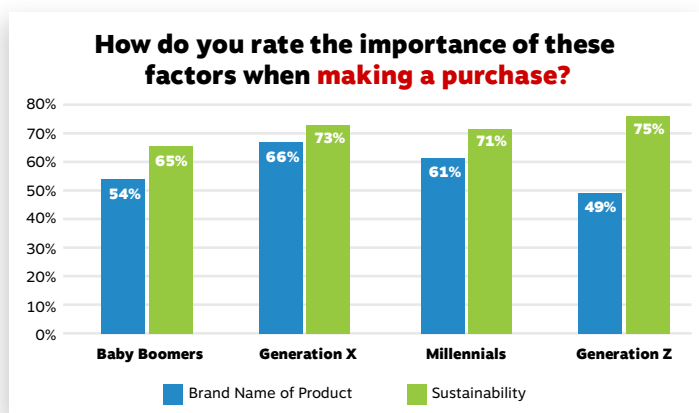
Consumers are more informed—and alarmed—about climate change than ever before.

The pandemic heightened concerns across generations. According to [Dentsu](#) global surveys conducted in 2021:

- **46%** said they were more concerned about climate change now than before.
- **73%** believed “voting with their wallet” could help improve the environment.
- **59%** “plan to stop using brands that are not committed to sustainability.”

Is sustainability a more important purchasing factor than brand loyalty?

Yes, it is, according to First Insight's November 2021 study, “State of Consumer Spending.” They find that 75% of Gen Z respondents consider sustainability more important than brand when making purchasing decisions. Their data show older generations don't lag far behind.



([firstinsight.com](https://www.firstinsight.com))



Cotopaxi®
Del Día Hip Pack



Currently, **94%** of Cotopaxi products contain repurposed, recycled, or responsible materials.

Brands are responding with more transparent and measurable sustainability commitments...AND requiring the same from their supply chains.

According to Dentsu, “customer and corporate attention has grown past what a company does itself to include their influence and impact through their supply chain.”

- **88%** would have more trust in brands which have their green credentials verified independently.
- **4%** would be more likely to buy from a company practicing sustainable media advertising.

Enterprises can't afford to work with brand services partners that contradict their sustainability brand values.

The data suggests enterprises that objectively define sustainability goals and transparently report progressive improvement will prefer brand services partners that do the same. They will want brand merchandisers whose values and actions are congruent with their own. They expect supplier partners to drive the same transparent improvement through their own operations and supply chains. [Accenture](#) concurs, expecting “an urgent need for the coming together of marketing, customer service and supply chain to protect and support brand reputation.”



In summary, merchandise decorators and distributors with authentic, measurable & demonstrable sustainability commitments will earn differentiating market advantage.

This is because working with aligned partners is further investment in their own sustainability goals, customer experiences AND resultant brand performance.



What does an authentic sustainability commitment look like?

Low Authenticity Sustainability

Actions limited to own enterprise and low-hanging fruit such as packaging changes or reduced energy.

No science-based goals.

No baseline metrics.

No dashboard or progress reporting.

High Authenticity Sustainability

Actions include supply chain measurement & continuous improvement where most impact is possible.

Objective, science-based, measurable goals.

Baseline metrics enable progress measurement.

Dashboard monitoring & transparent reporting on progress.



ecovadis

We joined EcoVadis to bring sustainability performance transparency to our clients ...and the industry!

EcoVadis Sustainability Ratings Network is the largest and most trusted agency for sustainability measurement with more than 85,000 rated companies across 200+ industries and 160+ countries.

Promo with Purpose

Learn more about how we provide a **meaningful and sustainable** experience that doesn't risk your brand's reputation in our guide. >>>

4 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS

They will objectively measure our operations and supply chain—including the operations of our largest suppliers—using 21 sustainability criteria across 4 pillars:



Environment



Labor & Human Rights



Ethics



Sustainable Procurement

ECO SCORECARD

The initial investment will produce an objective scorecard and baseline scores against which we can:



Build goals



Measure continuous improvement



Document performance to clients

Our investment will propel the **entire industry** forward.

This huge initial investment will benefit not only Staples Promotional Products, but also the entire industry.

