



# How brands can benefit from polarization



by Oliver McAteer

September 21, 2018



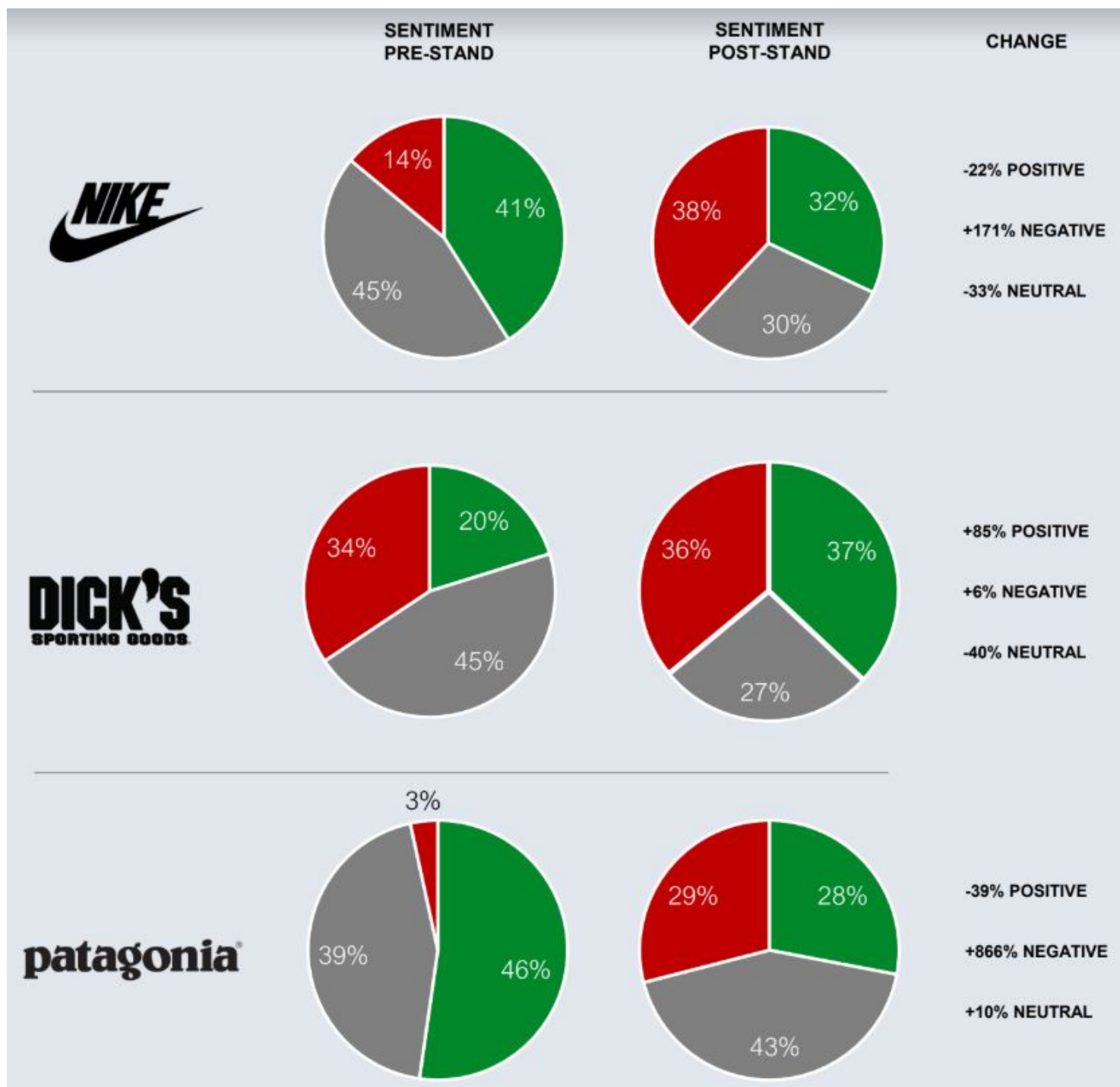
**"Brands have the power to transform a transactional relationship into a declaration of values, and that's a powerful thing to offer consumers."**

Polarization pays.

Brands which have been brave enough to stand up for its beliefs in this turbulent political climate have grown their equity, new data from Y&R's research arm, BAVSocial, shows.

However, imperative to this success is an authentic execution, such as Nike’s latest campaign in which the brand stood its ground in support of Colin Kaepernick amidst a heated controversy over police brutality and racism. Dick’s Sporting Goods also scored some serious points when it highlighted the value of people over guns when they stopped selling rifles earlier this year.

“Brands have the resources to effect change. So increasingly we see brands entering the political arena to spark dialogue and, hopefully, drive advocacy,” said Kyle Boots, director of brand and social analytics at Y&R and BAV Group.



“In this way, brands have the power to transform a transactional relationship into a declaration of values, and that’s a powerful thing to offer consumers.”

BAVSocial captures owned, earned and paid social media across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. It also measures cultural capital across blogs, news websites, forums and through search and website analytics.

The research found that both Nike and Dick’s saw an increase in vitality (measured by passion in the online conversation) and involvement (measured by engagement in the online conversation) during the time they took a political stance.

Brands see a roughly equal distribution between positive and negative sentiment post-stand, indicating that there’s an equal polar discourse in online conversation during the time of resistance.

This is a good thing, because both Nike and Dick’s garnered more respect online during their stand through a decrease in neutral sentiment and an increase in negative sentiment. In the wake of their political stands, there’s more support for both brands than boycott-focused conversation.

### Patagonia’s brand isn’t benefiting from being caught in the cross-fire between political leaders and consumer’s opinions about the current political climate

Natural Resources @NatRe... Dec 8, 2017  
@Patagonia doesn't want #MonumentsForAll, they just want your money #BearsEars  
pic.twitter.com/2nuvFS0imZ



Alice Venturi @AliceVincit  
Ok @NatResources, this tweet & the stupid email you sent out are way-the-hell over the line. Stop using an official government twitter account to attack the private sector. If you can't behave with a modicum of professionalism, find a more congenial line of work elsewhere.  
2:36 AM - Dec 9, 2017

Tami @mrstamimano  
You @NatResources and the American republican government is lying to American people. You are turning this country into a dictatorship. WTF is wrong with you people???

9:45 PM - Dec 8, 2017

Eleanor Rigby @EleanorRigbyATX  
@RyanZinke SHAME ON YOU! Lying about Patagonia! We all know they're simply standing w the rest of us in fighting against the theft & destruction of public lands & the murder of wildlife. You, Zinke, are a big fat liar and we know exactly what you're trying to do. Won't work.  
[twitter.com/waltshaub/stat...](https://twitter.com/waltshaub/stat...)

12:08 AM - Dec 11, 2017

Eric Boehlert @EricBoehlert - Dec 4, 2017  
wow. @patagonia CEO unloads on Trump and his Utah land grab; [shareblue.com/im-not-going-t...](https://shareblue.com/im-not-going-t...)



"I'm not going to stand back and just let ...  
Yvon Chouinard, founder and CEO of outdoor gear maker Patagonia, is fighting against [shareblue.com](https://shareblue.com)

Emily McG @EmHelpsThemOut  
I try to be thankful everyday for the people fighting against this horrible monster. This is just disgusting today.  
6:27 PM - Dec 4, 2017  
1 See Emily McG's other Tweets

“We’ve been trained to think of negative sentiment as evidence of brand decline,” continued Boots. “But it’s not that simple. Healthy discourse can be a crucial ingredient of brand development.”

Nike and Dick's political positioning works because of how it's been executed. Brands flirt with value suicide if they enter the space unprepared. Patagonia, for example, isn't benefiting from being caught in the cross-fire between political leaders and consumers' opinions about the current political climate after owner Yvon Chouinard took a very personal stance against Donald Trump.

BAVSocial's research found that brands must consider the context in which their political stance will be mentioned; personal attacks will obscure brand values and purpose, dragging it into a fruitless back and forth.

Brands should not just focus on positive sentiment, according to BAVSocial. Negative commentary can awaken brand superfans, encouraging them to participate in the conversation and leap to its defense. This charged advocacy is more valuable than positive mentions alone. In fact, the research shows that neutral sentiment has a greater connection to brand fatigue than negative sentiment.

Boots added: "Of course, the risk of taking a strong political stance can be great. Two questions marketers should ask themselves: One; is this issue core to my brand's beliefs and something consumers would interpret as authentic? Two; beyond visibility, what do we hope to accomplish?"

"Brands need to earn the right to participate in a cultural conversation if they expect to be rewarded for their bravery. Nike and Dick's have garnered significant support because their beliefs and how they communicate them align with their brand promise. It wasn't just about grabbing a headline."

### Tags

Agencies

Retail brands

Advertising

---

 Tweet

 Share

 Share

## RELATED ARTICLES



**AT&T, The Trevor Project expand crisis resource for LGBTQ youth**

---



DDB Spain launches 'Heroes of Today' to fight discrimination



## Ad Club's Brave Brand honorees describe brave partnerships

---



## NFL star Wade Davis on how men can join equality movement

---



**Girlfriends creator Mara Brock Akil's studio struggle to run show**

---





**Emma Stone to discuss mental health at NY Advertising Week**

---



**Machine learning improves campaign effectiveness, study shows**

---



## **Fantastic interns and where to find them**

---



## Spotify and Ancestry collab serves up your music DNA

---

### **Subscribe today for just \$89 a year**

Get the very latest news and insight from *Campaign* with unrestricted access to [campaignlive.com](https://www.campaignlive.com), plus get exclusive discounts to *Campaign* events

BECOME A SUBSCRIBER

### **GET YOUR CAMPAIGN DAILY FIX**

The latest work, news, advice, comment and analysis,  
sent to you every day

REGISTER FREE

## FOLLOW US

 @Campaignliveus

 CampaignUS

Text size [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)

Get more from Campaign US



LOGIN MY ACCOUNT 



SIGN UP TO OUR BULLETINS 

FOLLOW US



## About

[About us](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[Editorial Complaint](#)

[Community rules](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Safe senders](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

[Newsletters](#)

## Haymarket US

[PRWeek US](#)

[Medical Marketing & Media](#)

## Haymarket Global

[Campaign UK](#)

[Campaign Asia](#)

[Campaign India](#)

[Campaign Middle East](#)

[Campaign Turkey](#)

[PR Week](#)



© Haymarket Media Group Ltd. | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Cookie Notice](#) | [Privacy Notice](#)

