

# Social Purpose Speaks to Customers

## Influencing Purchases, Social Purpose Is the Fifth 'P'



### VM STAFF REPORT

For decades, classical marketing rested upon the foundation of the so-called “4 Ps,” better known as product, price, promotion and placement. But the world is changing, as most marketers, eyecare professionals and retailers know. And now a fifth “P” has wedged its way into the marketing equation: Purpose, or social purpose and corporate responsibility.

“Retailers still must get the basics right, no matter what category they compete in,” Neil Stern, a senior partner at Chicago-based consulting practice McMillan Doolittle, told *Vision Monday*. “Once they have this, then having good CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) programs can begin to make a difference as customers look to do business with companies that share their values.”

If a consumer finds the quality and price of a product are equal, social purpose has “consistently been the leading purchase trigger for global consumers since 2008,” overtaking brand loyalty and design/innovation as the key factor in purchase decision-making, according to PR agency Edelman’s “goodpurpose” study. Subsequently, in its Earned Brand 2016 study, Edelman reported that

“categories are being re-imagined ... [and] consumers have new expectations of brands, with 62 percent saying they refuse to buy a brand if it fails to meet its obligations to society.”

As Unilever’s distinguished chief marketing officer Keith Weed wrote in a recent essay, “Brands can help people to connect to a political process that will make an impact on the world they live in. That is a brand’s role as a citizen—to help consumers be citizens too.”

With research indicating that social purpose now ranks high among consumers, and its role in marketing becoming more important, one question that remains is whether these efforts translate to retail sales. Recent studies seem to indicate that companies with recognized social purpose projects as a main element of their mission are seeing a lift in product sales.

In a Nielsen study last year, 52 percent of respondents said they had purchased at least one product or service in the past six months from a socially responsible company. To determine if these sentiments impacted actual retail performance, Nielsen reviewed retail sales data across a variety of consumable categories and found that average annual sales increased 2 percent for products with sustainability claims and 5 percent for

products promoting sustainability actions through marketing programs. However, brands without these showed only a 1 percent sales gain, Nielsen noted.

“Purpose, a brand or company’s reason for being beyond profits, is now pervasive around the globe,” according to Edelman.

The social purpose factor in purchasing decisions seems to be deeply ingrained in the Millennial generation. According to retail consultant Stern, the Millennial demographic is “absolutely going to drive greater focus in this area.”

He noted that this group is more likely to do business with brands who share their values and, secondly, “they are much more driven by word-of-mouth, recommendations from friends and social means of spreading brand values. The more organic a brand’s CSR platform is, the more likely it will resonate with this customer base.”

Jenny Amaraneni, a founder and managing director of Solo Eyewear, founded the company based on what she recognized as a critical need for better eyecare in many parts of the world. Amaraneni told *VM* that she believes 75 percent to 80 percent of the San Diego-based sunglass firm’s customers “are familiar with our give-back efforts”

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## 141 Eyewear Donating a Pair for Each Pair It Sells



141 Eyewear is a Portland-based philanthropic company that donates a pair of frames for each pair it sells. In the beginning, the company aimed to give back to children in need in the U.S., but then enlarged its demographic and now is donating to anyone in need regardless of age.

In addition to selling on its website, 141 also partners with retailers and organizations who hold free vision care events and request frames directly from the company. This year alone, 141 donated to organizations such as the Seattle King County Clinic, the Willis Eye Hospital Give Kids Sight Day Event, Care Oregon clinics and the New England College of Optometry.

The company will also partner with retailers who give back to their community. From establishing partnerships with Myoptic Optometry and the Rose-

mary Anderson High School, to supporting the Ossip Ophthalmology + Optometry (Indiana) Day of Giving, many of the company's partners already organize their own free eyecare events, which 141 supports.

Visit Website: <http://141eyewear.com/>

## Article One Eyewear Funding for Vitamin A



Article One Eyewear is an independent eyewear company based in Flint, Mich. Founded in Chicago in 2012 by Flint native, Wes Stoody, the company set out to raise awareness and funding for supplementation of vitamin A in developing nations. "I learned that about half a million children go blind from Vitamin A deficiency and half of those children die within a year," Stoody stated. "So we donate \$2 for every

pair we sell to Helen Keller International."

According to Stoody, Article One has donated enough to Helen Keller International to fund a year's worth of Vitamin A supplements for 15,000 children thus far.

In keeping true to their philosophy of giving back, the company, which relocated to Flint in 2014, decided to create a limited edition collection for the Community Foundation of Greater Flint—an organization dedicated to long term solutions for the health and development of Flint's youth in the wake of the water crisis—with all profits going to the organization.

"I made the decision last winter that we couldn't be doing business in Flint without helping in some way—financially or through other efforts," said Stoody. The Flint Collection is comprised of 300 pairs of sunglasses that come in three models and are sold directly through the company's website. As a symbol of the water crisis and a reminder that the purchase went to a good cause, each frame has Zeiss Vision's sun lenses with a blue tint. The company also redesigned its logo plaque to look like the shape of a water drop.

Visit Website: [www.articleoneeyewear.com/](http://www.articleoneeyewear.com/)

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to fund better eyecare around the world.

"However, I do not think this is the primary motivation in them making a purchase decision," she added, noting that Solo sunglasses (made with repurposed bamboo and recycled plastic) still have to be stylish and comfortable to spur purchase decisions.

"Early on, we assumed everyone was aware of [our social responsibility efforts], but then we started to realize that we had a segment of customers who were literally just buying our glasses because they think they are cool," she said.

The key tactics for implementing successful CSR programs is making sure they are holistic and

well-thought through, according to Stern. "If it feels like it was done for corporate or PR reasons, [these programs] can fall flat as customers believe they may be 'greenwashing' and are not really sincere. Companies like Ben & Jerry's, Toms, Stonyfield Yogurt or Warby Parker gain more credit because they have built CSR into a broader reaching programs of social initiatives."

Stern also noted that successful CSR programs should be balanced, and that retailers can't afford to overlook the "right-price, right-product, right-location" tenets of marketing to execute CSR programs.

"Of course, there may be CSR initiatives that are more customer-focused, but doing the right thing

from a CSR perspective may mean implementing initiatives that the customer isn't aware of. This could include more upstream programs or more internally employee driven initiatives," he added.

Looking ahead, Solo Eyewear's Amaraneni said she believes "brands giving back is the future" and that all companies will have to embrace in some form the effort to source ethically, use sustainable materials or support worthwhile initiatives with a portion of their profits.

Today, social purpose is being translated by many eyewear product collections and brands in the market. Read on for a sampling of how some optical companies are customizing their branding to support social purpose causes. ■



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## Costa Building Brands Through Archetypes



“Costa is one of the fastest growing premium sunglass brands and has many loyal consumers. Of our one million+ social fans, we are more engaged than all major sunglass brands. Staying involved, current and responsive is the key to engaging social media influences/brand ambassadors and we provide them with various social platforms to share their Costa experiences with others,” the company said.

### These platforms include:

[www.costadelmar.com](http://www.costadelmar.com)  
[www.facebook.com/costasunglasses](https://www.facebook.com/costasunglasses)  
[www.twitter.com/costasunglasses](https://www.twitter.com/costasunglasses)  
[www.instagram.com/costasunglasses](https://www.instagram.com/costasunglasses)  
[www.pinterest.com/costasunglasses](https://www.pinterest.com/costasunglasses)  
[www.wateryrave.com](http://www.wateryrave.com)

Costa’s brand target is the Explorer archetype as defined by “The Hero and the Outlaw: Building Extraordinary Brands Through the Power of Archetypes” by Margaret Mark and Carol Pearson. Some of the tenets outlined by the authors include:

- Life Journey: To follow paths that are self-discovered. Inspire others to explore uncharted territory.
- Lesson To Learn: To take the initiative while coordinating with others to break barriers and accomplish great things.
- Defining Grace: Self-Motivation.

Costa is committed to causes that protect the world’s waters through local and global partnerships, films, events and gatherings. For Costa, conservation is all about sustainable fishing and protecting the Earth’s fisheries. Many areas that should be vibrant and healthy are all but devoid of native fish because they have fallen victim to poor fishing practices, unregulated development, lack of watershed protection or all of the above, the company said.

Costa has launched a “Kick Plastic” initiative and works with partners around the world to help increase awareness and influence policy so that both the fish and fishermen of tomorrow will have healthy waters to enjoy. For more information on Costa’s Kick Plastic message, or to join in the global movement, visit <http://bit.ly/kickplastic>, or search for conversations through #KickPlastic. Also, watch and share the short animated video explaining the plastic pollution problem by going to <http://bit.ly/kickplasticvid>.

From spearheading and supporting important scientific research fish tagging programs like Project Permit with Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, to hosting a concert for more than 9,000 University of Alabama students to raise money for the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) and The Billfish Foundation, Costa works hard to make a difference in the name of sustainable sport fishing.

The company has also helped develop sport fishing business models that can protect and preserve not just indigenous fish species, but entire cultures. In 2012, Costa premiered the feature film, “Jungle Fish,” a story about how fly fishing can save the fate of an Amerindian village in Guyana. The film, which earned a Sundance award, tells a story Costa is helping to replicate around the world as the company actively works with government leaders in the U.S. and globally to support sustainable sport fishing.

As a company philosophy, Costa encourages others to help in any way they can.

Visit Website: [www.costadelmar.com](http://www.costadelmar.com)

## Eyes of Faith Wear & Share Program



Eyes of Faith Optical, the Christian faith-based eyewear company, has been donating a portion of its gross sales to faith-based charities since the eyewear company’s founding in 2008. But its signature “Wear & Share” program developed in 2011 provides a broader foundation to its social purpose efforts.

“Our Wear & Share promise is our social purpose and is a promise to deliver the values of our Christian faith through vision-specific mission work here and all over the world,” said Jim Schneider, president of Eyes of Faith, a business he co-founded with his wife Amy.

Eyes of Faith’s growing partnership with Sight Ministries has made the Wear & Share program possible (the phrase is trademarked), by allowing customers to donate a complete pair of prescription glasses or sunglasses to someone in need around the world with every Eyes of Faith purchase.

“When you wear Eyes of Faith, you share the love of Christ because part of each purchase supports the gift of sight for thousands every year. Having a social purpose is an integral part of our company’s branding message. However, it’s also vital that we offer fashionable, fun styles that eyecare professionals want to offer and their patients want to wear. Without that, Wear & Share cannot happen,” Schneider said.

“A brand to believe in” is how we want to be known—this phrase embodies our vision for Eyes of Faith and our Wear & Share promise. We distinguish

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ourselves by selling exclusively to independent ECPs. Every ECP that connects our brand to their communities becomes an extension of our brand and the Wear & Share message, and they can believe in the promise that our company transforms their sales into something good and helpful in the world.

“Plus, they can believe in our brand because we are committed to the philosophy that independent ECPs are truly the best, most appropriate place to shop for and be professionally fitted with glasses.”

Eyes of Faith also communicates via its website, Christian radio, Facebook posts of videos and email. “For example, when we posted videos throughout our week in Kenya, they received thousands of views every day. Finally, our branding message goes beyond the digital framework by putting it right on the temple with our Wear & Share logo and biblical scripture that corresponds to the name of frame,” Schneider said.

Their target customer is the independent eyecare professional who wants to offer something different and meaningful in their optical—ECPs who want to make sure their product offering includes something that every patient can get excited about. “A key demographic is the ECP who may be active in their church, have an affinity to support mission work, and/or someone who understands and believes Eyes of Faith will speak to their patients based on shared values, lifestyle and the universal idea of giving back.”

Sight Ministries International has been their principal benefactor since they launched Wear & Share. “The company supports them with funding to help deliver eyecare and brand new glasses to thousands of people in areas like Kenya, Indonesia, Peru, and Guatemala,” Schneider said.

In 2016, Eyes of Faith also supported eyecare mission work for church groups, student chapters of the Fellowship of Christian Optometrists, a homeless event in Orlando, See the Lord, and the Essilor Vision Foundation by donating thousands of glasses.

Visit Website: [www.eofoptical.com](http://www.eofoptical.com)

## Modo Eyewear Helping Children See, Eco Awareness



Modo Eyewear is a company that runs on two main pledges when it comes to social purpose. With the Modo brand, the company has the “Buy a Frame—Help a Child See” program which works with the Seva Foundation to provide schools on the outskirts of New Delhi with vision screenings, optometrist exams at partner hospitals and when needed, free prescription glasses and corrective treatments and surgeries.

The first phase of this initiative will help at least 200,000 children. Each Modo frame that is sold gives a child the sight-saving services they need.

With Modo's Eco brand, the company's program “One Frame—One Tree” works in partnership with the NGO Trees for the Future to plant one tree for every Eco frame sold. In addition to Eco's frames being sustainable—made from either 95 percent recycled content or 63 percent bio-based material—the project works with communities to help farmers develop sustainable land-use practices.

“One Frame—One Tree” has already helped to plant over 1.4 million trees since its inception, and that number continues to grow with every Eco frame sold,” Modo said.

“Modo is driven to be the industry leader in social responsibility, and so we are constantly working on new ways to make a difference. We always want to give back and empower the next generation, and to inspire others to work toward increasing possibilities for those who need them most,” the company said.

For some practices, promoting the social purpose causes behind their purchase has resonated with

patients and customers.

Precision Vision of Edmond in Edmond, Okla. is owned by Selena McGee, OD, who always mentions the initiatives to patients when introducing Modo's frame selection.

“Patients always seem to be impressed by the generosity of giving a needy child a frame and knowing their purchase allows them to be a part of that makes them feel good,” McGee said. “In many cases, the program has been a factor in their final purchase decision.”

Modo's social purpose initiatives are promoted through all of the company's marketing messages whether through their website or on in-store counter cards and POP materials. Information about the company's programs are also included with each frame's case.

Wink Optique in Tulsa, Okla. carries Modo's frames and optometrist DJ Riner believes the awareness of social causes have been key in branding Wink Optique.

“Our patients engage deeply with Modo Eyewear's ‘Buy a Frame, Help a Child See’ and Eco Eyewear's ‘One Frame- One Tree’ programs,” Dr. Riner said. “The support materials, POP and resources available from Modo are excellent. The in-office visibility gives us opportunities to share the message with our patients and allows them to be a participant in the work and story of giving back. The positive response has created an atmosphere of enthusiasm. It's very common to hear patients say, ‘I am so glad someone is meeting this need, and it's great to be able to be a part of it.’”

Visit Website: [www.modo.com](http://www.modo.com)

## Paws N Claws Animal Charities and Shelters

Paws N Claws, an eyewear company based in Pittsburgh, Pa., has focused its social purpose initiatives around animals. Through their programs, they give a

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portion of their proceeds to animal charities and animal shelters.

“Our passion for animals shines through in our array of eyewear and accessories designs and is apparent in our charitable contributions to the ASPCA which have totaled over \$60,000 since the brand’s creation in 2011,” said Sam Shapiro, founder of Paws N Claws.



Their eyewear is created with the animal lover in mind and the company proudly considers their product “Eyewear for Animal Lovers.” Paws N Claws frames are embellished with details such as subtle paw prints, bones and animals prints. The brand reaches out to not only dog and cat lovers but everyone else in between while also being of interest to customers who are looking for fashionable eyewear at an affordable price.

“For us, it’s a lifestyle and not just a buzzword. Paws N Claws raises funds and awareness for animals in need by donating 5 percent of the purchase price of our unique eyewear, sunglasses and accessories to benefit the ASPCA,” Shapiro said.

Along with these efforts, company founders, Sam and Phyllis Shapiro continue their activism by donating food, money, time and eyewear products to a variety of foundations as well as participating in an ongoing Support 4 Paws Pet Food Drive that they created.

Visit Website: [www.pawsnclawseyewear.com](http://www.pawsnclawseyewear.com)

## Proof Eyewear Heritage, Eco-Friendly and Give Back

Since the conception of Proof Eyewear in 2010, the “do good” mentality has been a driving factor in what the company does. “We wanted to create a product from materials provided by the earth that would benefit people and places globally through the purchase of those products,” said Tanner Dane, chief operating officer and general manager of Proof Eyewear.

“We always go back to the three pillars of Proof: heritage, eco-friendly and give back.

**Heritage:** My two brothers and I launched Proof in 2010, but our roots in the wood business go back to 1954 when our Grandpa Bud started a sawmill. He left a heritage of hardwork and craftsmanship that still inspires us today. We got our start by pulling our money together and boot strapping as a small start up in my brother’s garage. We stay true to our roots and love the outdoor culture that is found right in our backyard here in Idaho.

**Eco-Friendly:** Being able to offer eyewear made from sustainable materials is key. All of our collections fall within our mission of being eco-friendly. From wood to cotton-based acetates to recycled aluminum, we’ve continued to pioneer sustainable eyewear since day one.

**Give Back:** It’s more than just selling product here. We know how much need there is around the world, and if we can do our part in helping affect change even if it’s small, it’s really what drives us each day.”

Proof focuses on places around the globe that need the most help and keep it pretty open as far as projects go. “We don’t just focus on eyecare but anything that can effect change in people from rebuilding homes to providing general health screenings. We are looking to do two major projects around the world each year. Our non-profit partner, HELP Intl., coordinates the projects, and we get to have boots on the ground volunteering in the country. We get to see exactly where the donation is going and who it’s effecting,” Tanner said.

From the beginning, Proof has volunteered and donated to various programs that provided tsunami relief in Japan, child soldier rehabilitation in Africa



and reforestation in Haiti.

“In 2013, we wanted to start giving on a larger scale. We looked for needs around the world and found that India was home to more than one quarter of the world’s blind population. We decided to create sunglasses around The India Project and raised over \$25,000 to build two eye clinics that continue to provide sight-giving cataract surgeries to those in need.

From then on, Proof’s Do Good program continued to grow as the company has. The company has traveled and volunteered with the non-profit, HELP International, in executing a variety of projects including economic development, education, physical health, etc. Their Do Good Projects have reached El Salvador, Nepal, the Philippines and they were just in Uganda over Thanksgiving.

Visit Website: [www.iwantproof.com](http://www.iwantproof.com)

## Revo ‘Buy Vision, Give Sight’

By the year 2020, Revo, in partnership with U2 singer Bono and the Brien Holden Vision Institute, hope to prevent vision impairment in more than 5 million people. Through their program “Buy Vision, Give Sight” when a customer purchases a new pair of Revo sunglasses, \$10 from the



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sale of every pair up to \$10 million will be donated.

This program targets customers who lead an active lifestyle, appreciate quality and want to stand out from the crowd. The campaign directly aligns with ClearVision's mission of making a meaningful positive impact on the lives of others.

"Throughout the years, we have woven various philanthropic efforts into our culture, offering opportunities for employees to get involved in various ways. Our philanthropic efforts have reinforced our message of compassion, respect and integrity," the company said.

**Visit Website:** [www.revo.com](http://www.revo.com)

## Solo Eyewear Taking Care of Each Other and Our Planet



The reason why Solo Eyewear came into being is due to the great need for eyecare in the world, according to the company's founder Jenny Amaraneni. After learning that 80 percent of the world's blindness is preventable and 1 billion people lack access to eyecare, Amaraneni decided to address this great need by launching a line of eco-friendly sunglasses where each pair purchased funds eyecare for people in need.

"We realize the world does not need another

sunglass company. However, it does need companies that care about people and the planet. That is why we at Solo Eyewear exist," Amaraneni said.

"Our message represents Solo's core beliefs that we should take care of each other and our planet. We use 10 percent of our profits to fund eyecare for people in need and we incorporate recycled and repurposed materials in the construction of our glasses. "

Solo shares its brand message through email marketing, social media and word of mouth. "We've found that our customers typically tell their friends and family about why they chose to support Solo Eyewear. That means a lot to us."

Their typical customer is usually between the ages of 25 to 35, active, outdoorsy and educated about social and environmental issues. "Our sunglasses are unisex and appeal to both men and women."

Solo Eyewear partners with two non-profit organizations, Restoring Vision and Aravind Eye Care System, to fund eye exams, eyeglasses and cataract surgeries. To date, Solo has funded eyecare for over 13,000 people in need across 32 countries, which yielded a \$3.9 million economic impact.

"By restoring a person's vision, he/she is able to lead a fuller, more productive life," Amaraneni said.

**Visit Website:** [www.soloeyewear.com](http://www.soloeyewear.com)

## Toms One for One Concept

Toms is one of the most well-known names when it comes to the idea of social purpose being the backbone of a brand. The company was started in 2006 when founder, Blake Mycoskie, saw the hardships facing children growing up without shoes.

In creating Toms Shoes, the company sought to match every pair of shoes purchased with a new pair of shoes for a child in need. One for One.

Some 10 years later, and this initial idea has grown into a powerful business model addressing the need in health, education and economic oppor-



tunity for children and their communities. In realizing the One for One concept could serve other needs, Toms launched Toms Eyewear in 2011. In keeping true to the core of the brand, purchases of this product help to improve the quality of lives of those in need by helping to restore sight.

In most of these cases, access to care is a major barrier, so Toms Giving Partners intentionally goes out to remote communities to deliver cost-effective blindness prevention and treatment.

Working with 13 Sight Giving Partners, Toms Eyewear purchases provide a person with a full eye exam by a trained medical professional. The company supports treatments for three of the most common vision problems including prescription glasses, sight-saving surgery and medical treatment. Through these efforts, Toms has helped restore sight to over 445,000 people in need.

"At Toms, we believe we can improve people's lives through business. Giving is truly at the center of our business model and is what fuels our future," the company said. "Blake has often said he didn't set out to start a shoe company, he set out to give shoes to children in need. We share this message of giving with our customers, empowering individuals to make decisions that can help build a better tomorrow."

**Visit Website:** [www.toms.com](http://www.toms.com) ■