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Why Brand Enthusiasm Will Create Demand for More Sustainable Products

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There is a general consensus in the literature that the concept of 'Brand Loyalty' is no longer adequate to describe the way that consumer engage with brands and the companies that own them. IBM has defined a new measure, Brand Enthusiasm, as a new and more relevant way to understand consumers and how they want to engage with brands. This paper is based on interviews with over 18,000 consumers in 12 countries, and reveals how millennial consumer groups, most noticeably in growth markets, have vastly different engagement preferences and expectations for common categories of product (e.g. apparel, food, personal care). The differences are particularly visible, for example, in product development where there is a greater willingness to submit ideas or even co-fund design and development (e.g. via crowd-funding): this is a stated preference of Millennials that is different to previous cohorts. Combined with the accepted view that the millennial generation are also more aware and active in respect of sustainability concerns, this generation of 'Brand Enthusiasts' represents a significant opportunity for success with product designs that fit with the principles of the circular economy. In addition, social and digital channels are opening the door to direct relationships with consumers, ensuring greater alignment with changing social circumstances and values. For example, in markets where food packaging and spoilage is a concern, Brand Enthusiasts are more willing than other consumer groups to share their demand and consumption data via social media so that manufacturers and retailers can improve packaging designs and improve forecast accuracies.