

# CSR, celebs and discounts dominate back-to-school buzz



by Lindsay Stein  
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**The online study analyzed social posts from consumers about recent school-related brand campaigns.**

This back-to-school season, consumers are most excited about brands and retailers that have discounts or offers, as well as social responsibility and celebrity or influencer tie-ins, according to a new study.

The online study, conducted by multinational big data research company MavenMagnet, analyzed 23,980 posts from consumers between July 1 and August 15 around their perception of 12 top brand campaigns for back-to-school. The data was sampled from various sources, including forums, news sites, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and more.

Brands and retailers of all sizes and scale ran campaigns this season, such as Walmart, Target, Kohl's, Hollister, Ikea, Amazon, Apple, Bed Bath & Beyond, Justice and Erin Condren.

Among the campaigns, those with deals, contests, discounts and freebies, received a very high positive sentiment from consumers (96 percent).

The brands that donated to a cause as part of their back-to-school efforts were also very well-received by consumers.

Aditya Ghuwalewala, founder and CEO of MavenMagnet, said that the CSR focus among consumers "was evident in campaigns of brands such as Amazon, Staples and Ikea and were positively received by the consumers."

The use of celebrities and influencers, he added, worked most of the time, particularly around ideas for dorm rooms, apparel and computing products. But sometimes, the study revealed, the celeb or influencer integration would overshadow the actual brand itself, such as Emma Chamberlain with Hollister.

Shaquille O'Neal was appreciated for his charitable initiative Shaq-to-School, which drove positive buzz around mainstream celebrity brand associations.

Being early isn't always better. Brands that released back-to-school commercials and in-store displays during the study were viewed with negative sentiments among students because they caused stress and were associated with the end of summer. Content that showcased children being excited about back-to-school was received with negative sentiment from parents, who viewed the ads as unrealistic.

In terms of format, consumers prefer video the most for their back-to-school social content (46 percent), followed by promos only (24 percent), digital promotions (15 percent), in-store (8 percent) and on-the-ground events (6 percent).

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