

## 4 key trends driving branded merchandise

In a time of shrinking budgets, where the pressure is on to show ROI for all marketing spend, branded merchandise remains a impactful way to draw attention to a brand. However, a good promotions strategy needs to embrace a changing market, ESG considerations, while being able to weather a tough economy.



Image source: everydayplus – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

Unlike a fleeting print advert or social media campaign, branded merch has longevity for many months, and if selected thoughtfully, plays a functional role in the lives of recipients too.

The world's biggest brands use these tools to connect with customers and build loyalty, spread their advertising messages, entrench recall, say thank you, motivate certain reactions, and drive repeated brand recognition and equity for months, if not years.

Kevin Vyvyan-Day, group CEO of Barron, shares some insights on some of the key trends in the branded merchandise and apparel market, and the important considerations in selecting your branded merch:

- **Social compacts**

Brands aren't just using apparel and promo goods for functionality, but also for the impact that it can have on social, environmental and personal initiatives.

Similarly, many brands look to products that promote a healthier lifestyle, and there is a big focus on the sustainability of materials used - think bamboo, seeded papers and a shift away from plastic and so on.

For most brands, they're looking for branded products that reflect their commitment to societal and environment initiatives. Bottom line: Brands are looking for more socially conscious promotional product choices that reflect their values.

- **b>Form meets function**

Besides having apparel that's intended for the workplace, garments that can be worn at work and then after hours and on the weekend are all the rage.

Light-weight knitwear, hoodies, fleece and functional features and comfort are top of mind. More and more users are also looking for styles that can meet the needs for ease and comfort at work, at home and at play.

Apparel trends show a distinct emphasis on health and wellness items, with outerwear and performance gear ranked as the gifts and giveaways employees and customers want most.

- **Memorable experiences matter**

After almost three years of pandemic, events, trade shows and launches are finally back in full swing. At the same time, businesses are also facing economic uncertainty, so they are looking to prioritise investment in revenue building activity, which means that creating the most memorable customer experiences is key.

Corporate gear and gifts will play a key role in providing a unique experience for attendees who make the effort to attend these events and trade shows – that keepsake that grabs attention and that attendees take home to reinforce the brand has never been more important.

- **Employee experience**

More corporates are seeing their branded merch as a way to reinforce their brand values and embrace their diverse workforce.

Employee onboarding kits of curated items that reflect the company's brand, values and culture are all the rage and a powerful induction tool to entrench important messaging around the corporate visions and values, with useful and functional branded merchandise often forming part of the incentives provided in employee recognition and reward programmes.

"In getting to grips with the massive diversity and range of products and trends in the market, work with an experienced merchandise reseller in aligning your promotional strategy to business and marketing objectives," advises Vyvyan-Day.

"They have access to thousands of products and ranges, understand the pricing dynamics and getting the best value for your money, the best quality branding solutions for the substrate and longevity thereof, as well as bringing creative and innovative ideas of how to align branded products to marketing campaign objectives.

## **ESG space**

He adds that other increasingly important aspects in the ESG space are also important considerations such as ethical sourcing and safety accreditation.

"A professional merch reseller will be able to propose products that are safe and reliable and that also represent the brand appropriately in terms of ethical sourcing and sustainability.

"If you're going to attach your good name to anything, work with an experienced, professional reseller who is adept at helping you navigate these important considerations, ensuring that there is no reputational risk in terms of the safety, quality, sustainability and origins of your branded merchandise, and ultimately your brand," he says.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>