
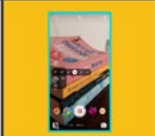












# 2021

## Digital Marketing Trends












You Need To Know

Social-in-place 	Point, shoot, story 	AR in MKTG
 Cookies and privacy	 The camera's rolling	
Social commerce 	Brands taking a stand 	
Magnetic advertisements 	Niche SoMe 	



# Contents



	Nothing stays the same	03
	The year of disruption: Social-in-place	05
	The rising tide of social commerce	08
	Outspoken brand activism	11
	Ephemeral content: Point, shoot, story	14
	The expanding world of AR	17
	Data privacy: Under the microscope	20
	Niche SoMe platforms: A broader horizon	23
	A fork in the advertising road	26
	Video formats open new doors	29
	Social media as public relations 2.0	32





# Welcome!



Let's get the elephant in the room out of the way:



#welcome #2021 #digitalMarketing #trends

*Nothing stays the same*

2020 has been downright bizarre in too many ways to mention. And, as this overall strangeness translates to the marketing realm, the notion of the 'ever-changing marketing landscape' has never been more applicable — if not understated.

Nothing stays the same — in life or in marketing — and this year, it feels especially important to examine the trends and developments taking place in digital marketing and social media. In 2020, we've seen unprecedented news stories hit our feeds, from a global pandemic to civil unrest to natural disaster. And, in these turbulent times, marketing has required a great deal of tact and sensitivity.

That's why, above all, the ability to 'read the room' is an overarching imperative atop everything compiled here. That being said, the following is a list of 10 key digital marketing trends that are on the upswing as we transition into 2021. Many companies are currently capitalizing on these trends successfully, and with proper execution, you can too.







Webinar Summit

The unskippable:

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# 2021 Trends Virtual Summit

Dive in further to reveal the secrets of this  
year's digital marketing trends.



Save my seat



# The year of disruption: Social-in-place



When the whole world is focused on the same thing, we rely on social media to express ourselves and feel connected.

2020 has been the year of disruption: Climate Crisis, COVID-19, Racial Justice, #BlackLivesMatter. What can we take away from all this (in a business context)? And what on earth can we say on social media — as a brand — when the entire country/world is laser-focused on one hot button issue? Apparently, a lot.

After all, those alive today have never experienced anything of the same magnitude as what is currently happening. 2020 was a period of transformation. A year of change and a year *to* change — and in profound ways. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced nearly everyone to alter the means in which they interact and communicate, at least to some degree. Consequently, on a fundamental level, being *social* has changed.

## Social media usage during disruption

In March 2020, when the lockdowns and social distancing protocols first began, Facebook's analytics department reported a 50% surge in messaging. Similarly, WhatsApp saw a 40% lift in usage and TikTok global downloads grew 5% month-over-month — adding over 12 million unique US-based visitors.



All this is indicative that, since so many people were essentially confined to their homes due to the pandemic, overall social media use skyrocketed. In fact, 46% of women and 41% of men say they've spent more time on social media during the pandemic than they had prior — and new research has shown that 80-90% of people now consume news and entertainment for an average of nearly 24 hours in a given week. This represents a staggering amount of time engaging with online media — and it's vital for your brand to have a presence in that equation.



# social # in # place

Video streaming increased by 12% in the first week of quarantine in the U.S.

So, while it can be difficult to figure out how to speak to your audience on social media during times of crisis, being present, interacting regularly, and focusing on community-building is even more critical now than it was before. As fewer customers crowd into stores, they're doing more shopping online.

Or, at the very least, they're spending a lot more time on social media — which means that's where your brand should be striving to reach them. And, by cultivating meaningful engagement with your audience, this familiarity can bolster brand affinity, brand loyalty, and ultimately, your brand's survival and success.

## Community building in times of crisis

Brands that invest in building an online community of social followers can reach out to them immediately to check in. As a brand that truly cares, you can serve your community and find ways to help. You can ask questions and listen. You can get instant feedback, and, conversely, your followers can receive instant answers. They can feel heard and supported in challenging times when they need it most — and this won't go unrecognized. For this reason, businesses that take the time to build communities stand to reap the rewards through periods of both turmoil and relative harmony.





#2021 digital trends

Social media  
has grown at  
an average  
rate of 12.5%  
year-over-year  
since 2015.

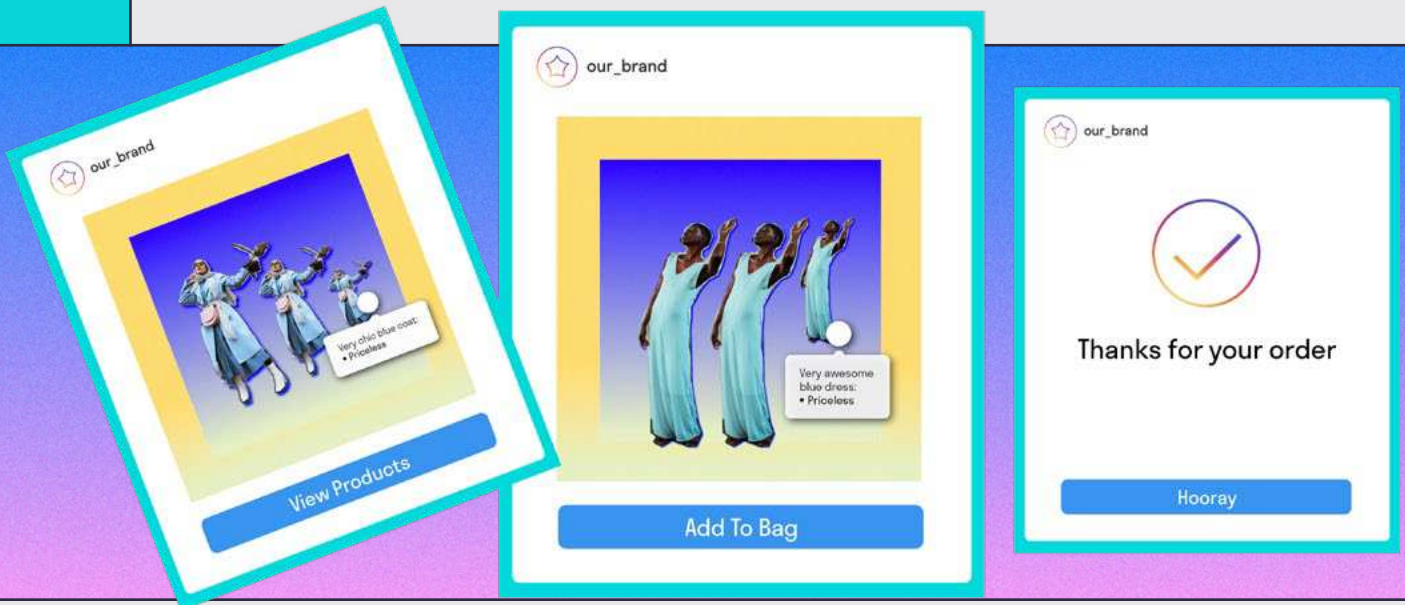
Backlinko







# The rising tide of social commerce



A swell in both at-home shopping and social media usage has created the perfect storm for social commerce to flourish.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted far more than the way we socialize and interact. It's altered the way we work, the way we travel (or lack thereof), and, perhaps most importantly for consumer brands, the way we *buy*. Lockdown measures have accelerated the shift to ecommerce by 5 years — and social commerce is rising along with that wave.

Most brands have already embraced digital — and consumers are largely accustomed to buying online. Now, with people spending more time than ever on social media (due to prolonged lockdowns), the stage has been set for a huge uptick in social commerce. But what exactly will that look like?

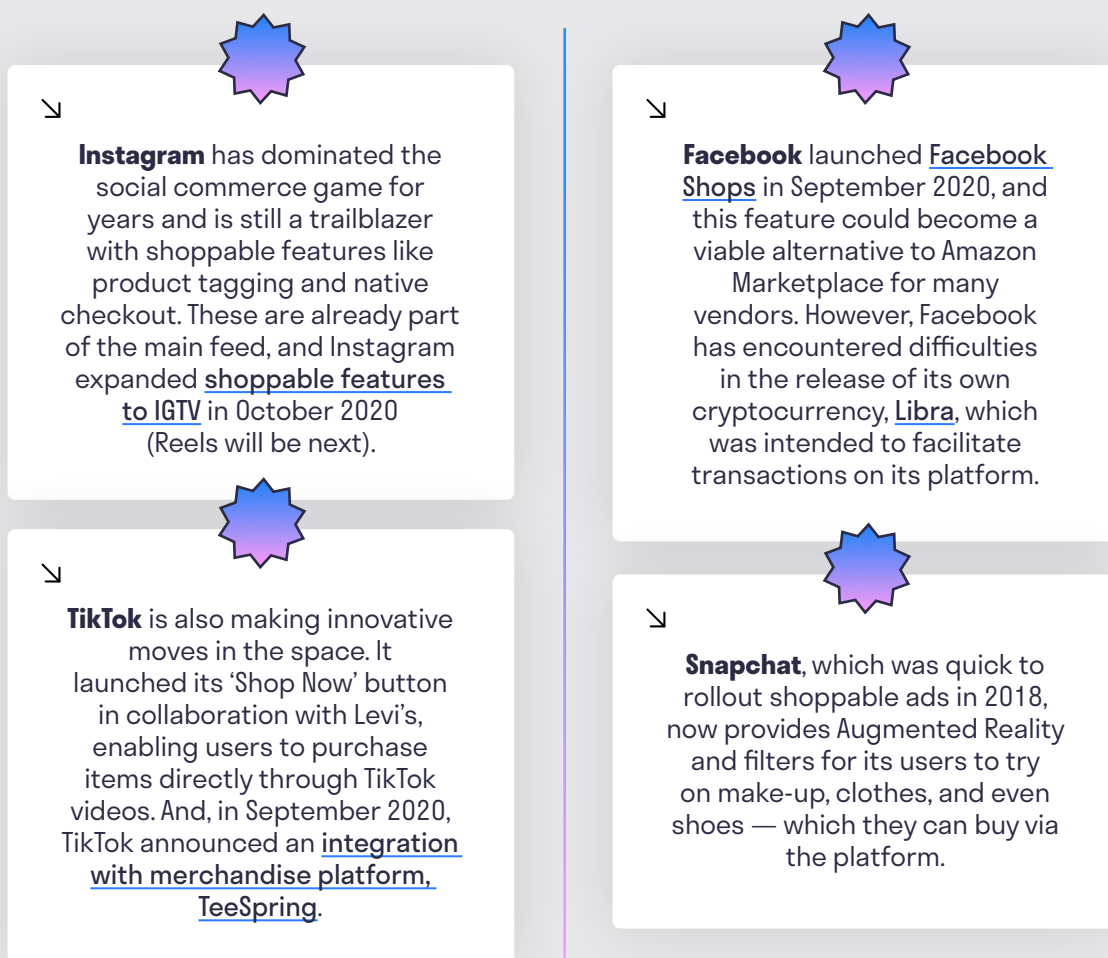
## The evolving social commerce landscape

As far as market segments, China is the true juggernaut in the space, with over 300M social buyers contributing to 11.6% of overall retail ecommerce sales in 2020. And Chinese companies have been rushing to cash in. For example, WeChat (a multi-purpose social app) started investing heavily in social commerce as early as 2017 with the introduction of Mini Programs, which are online stores that can be integrated within WeChat.





On that note, let's take a look at what the major platforms are doing to facilitate social commerce with more seamless, in-app buying experiences:



Instagram has dominated the social commerce game for years and is still a trailblazer with shoppable features like product tagging and native checkout. These are already part of the main feed, and Instagram expanded shoppable features to IGTV in October 2020 (Reels will be next).

Facebook launched Facebook Shops in September 2020, and this feature could become a viable alternative to Amazon Marketplace for many vendors. However, Facebook has encountered difficulties in the release of its own cryptocurrency, Libra, which was intended to facilitate transactions on its platform.

TikTok is also making innovative moves in the space. It launched its 'Shop Now' button in collaboration with Levi's, enabling users to purchase items directly through TikTok videos. And, in September 2020, TikTok announced an integration with merchandise platform, TeeSpring.

Snapchat, which was quick to rollout shoppable ads in 2018, now provides Augmented Reality and filters for its users to try on make-up, clothes, and even shoes — which they can buy via the platform.

A primary appeal of social commerce is hyper-personalization. So, for brands, one of the key success factors is knowing how to harness/analyze social data to produce relevant, personalized content and shopping experiences. That being said, a question mark still remains on whether brands will be able to target with the same level of granularity in the future, given the context of increased data security.

As 2020 comes to a close, the global social commerce market now weighs in at a hefty \$89.4B, with the US comprising \$26.9B of that. And we're still in the early stages, with the market forecasted to cross \$600B by 2027. From these stats, it's clear that brands who act now will be poised to capitalize on this massive tailwind — while those that don't risk being left in the dust.





#2021 digital trends

Over 76M people  
in the US will make  
a purchase via a  
social network at  
least once this year  
(38.4% of US social  
network users).

Business Insider





# Outspoken Brand Activism



Companies that take a public stance on controversial issues garner affinity from consumers — but with some risks.

Today, offering a fantastic product/service at an attractive price isn't always enough. Consumers want to buy from authentic, purpose-driven brands that stand for something and align with their personal values. In an era of divisive topics and staunch opinions, the statements a brand makes about socio-political issues can be the 'X-factor' that draws a loyal community of customers and followers.

## Giving new meaning to 'brand voice'

A study by Accenture Strategy found that 62% of consumers want companies to advocate for the issues they're passionate about. Similarly, 33% of consumers would intentionally buy more from a brand that voiced a controversial opinion congruent with their beliefs. Given this, it's no surprise that purpose-driven companies enjoy higher market shares, growing three times faster than their competitors on average.

These numbers paint a clear picture: brand activism will continue to be a potent business catalyst in 2021. So, if the leadership within your organization has strong opinions about a particular cause, then publicly engaging in activism could be a wise move. Not only will it be inherently





rewarding — it can also spur growth while simultaneously benefiting employee morale and company culture.

## Avoiding the pitfalls of pandering

Brands must be very mindful in their approach to activism, as disingenuous pandering will be met with backlash. Attempts to increase your brand's social capital should never be a performative gesture. If the issue doesn't resonate deep down to the core of your brand, it's probably best to stay neutral to avoid the appearance of bandwagoning.

On social media, authenticity (across the board) is key — but it's absolutely paramount when expressing opinions about socio-political matters. 61% of consumers feel that too many companies use social movements as a marketing ploy. And, with that in mind, the decision on whether to pursue brand activism can feel like a catch-22 — as consumers want brands to speak out, yet are often skeptical of those that do.



# brand # activism

75% of Millennials would agree that it's important for brands to give back to society.

For some companies, the decision to pursue activism will depend on audience/customer expectations. If you have an ardent and engaged customer base that's wondering why you've remained silent on a key issue, it might be time to let your opinion be known. After all, we live in outspoken times and consumers won't hesitate to shun a brand when they feel it hasn't reacted appropriately to a social issue.

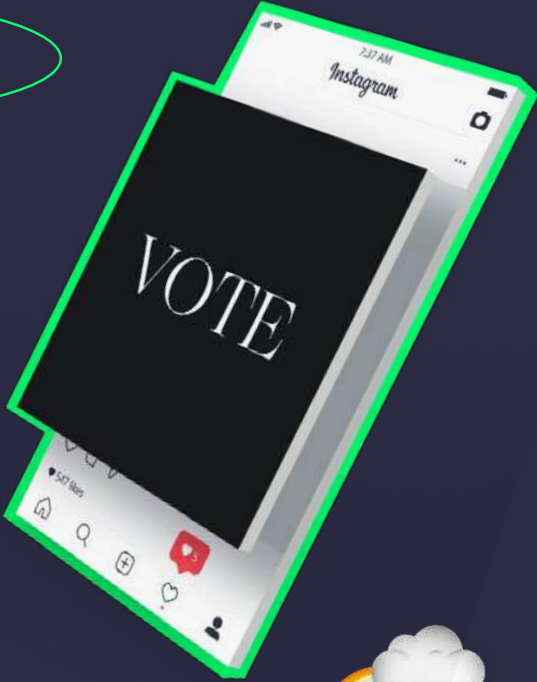
And this makes sense, as more and more consumers want to be able to relate to a company's purpose and mission. People are increasingly looking to connect with brands on a deeper level. But, in today's hyper-polarized landscape, it's impossible to appeal to everyone. For this reason, brand activism carries the unavoidable risk of rubbing some prospects and customers the wrong way — but you stand to gain a more zealous following by displaying the courage to take a side.





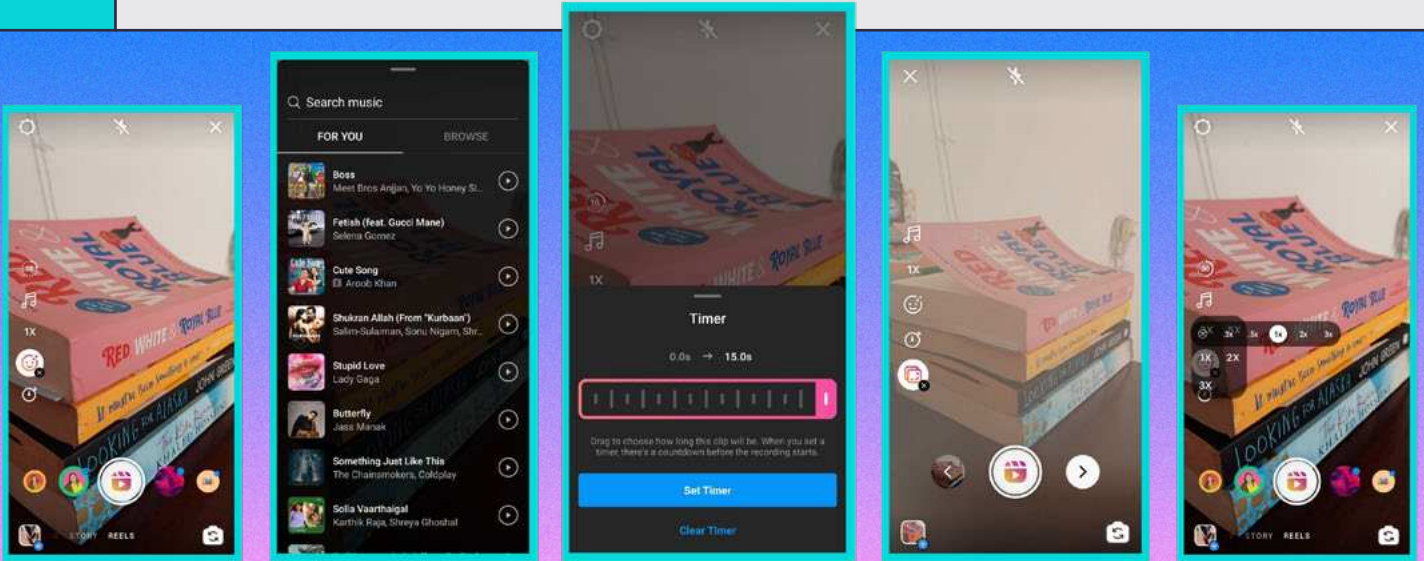
#2021 digital trends

Prior to the 2020 U.S. election, David Barrett, CEO of Expensify, sent an email to 10 million customers with the subject “Protect democracy, vote for Biden.” At the time of writing, no employees have quit over it.





# Ephemeral content: Point, shoot, story



Raw, unfiltered fleeting content is overtaking picture-perfect newsfeed posts as the preferred format to engage with.

This year, stories and other ephemeral content have continued to explode in popularity across social channels. The disappearing content format — which initially went mainstream via Snapchat — has become a full-fledged engagement powerhouse across multiple platforms. Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and even Twitter have all jumped onboard the ephemeral content train — and it's not slowing down any time soon. An overwhelming 86.6% of users now post stories on Instagram and 70% view stories daily.

## Leave high-production value at the door

The posts and ads that run in the ephemeral space tend to be more scrappy and down-to-earth than the glossy perfectionism we've grown accustomed to seeing in the newsfeed. Stories are more 'off the cuff' and, as such, resonate with viewers in a more authentic way. And this approach can be a major brand-builder: 62% of people have indicated they become more interested in a product/brand after seeing it featured in a story. Many companies are successfully leveraging this trend, with businesses making up one-third of the top-viewed stories on Instagram.







What is ephemeral content anyway?



#point #shoot #story

Ephemeral content refers to any media that's only accessible for a limited period of time (i.e. 24 hours) before disappearing. It can take many forms, but usually consists of images and videos.

WhatsApp and Instagram are leading the pack as the #1 and #2 most-used story products in the world — but other platforms are eager to claim a slice of the pie. In September 2020, Pinterest aimed to get in on the stories-style action with the release of [Story Pins](#), but with one notable difference: Story Pins are not technically ephemeral as they don't automatically disappear after 24 hours. Rather, they can be saved like regular Pins and discovered over time via search. Their initial presentation to viewers, however, is very similar to the ephemeral stories that appear on the other social sites.

## Reasons behind the buzz

So, what is it about this type of content that's caused it to gain so much traction? For starters, ephemeral content, by design, is fast-paced and fleeting, creating more opportunities to interact with followers and nurture the relationship with your audience. Stories are also more casual and less staged, allowing the freedom to present yourself (or your brand) in an authentic light — which is what people want to see nowadays. Furthermore, stories don't clog up the feed and are oriented vertically, making them perfect for quick-and-easy mobile viewing.

A key component that makes ephemeral content so effective is [the FOMO \(Fear of Missing Out\) factor](#). Since stories will eventually disappear, users are more likely to tune in and take action, as they won't have the opportunity to do so later on. So, from a marketing perspective, ephemeral content can have a similar effect to a countdown timer — which is partially why many brands have been seeing better results with [Story Ads](#) (as opposed to newsfeed placements). So, while stories only last 24 hours, ephemeral content is here to stay. And brands who have yet to take full advantage should be feeling some FOMO by now.



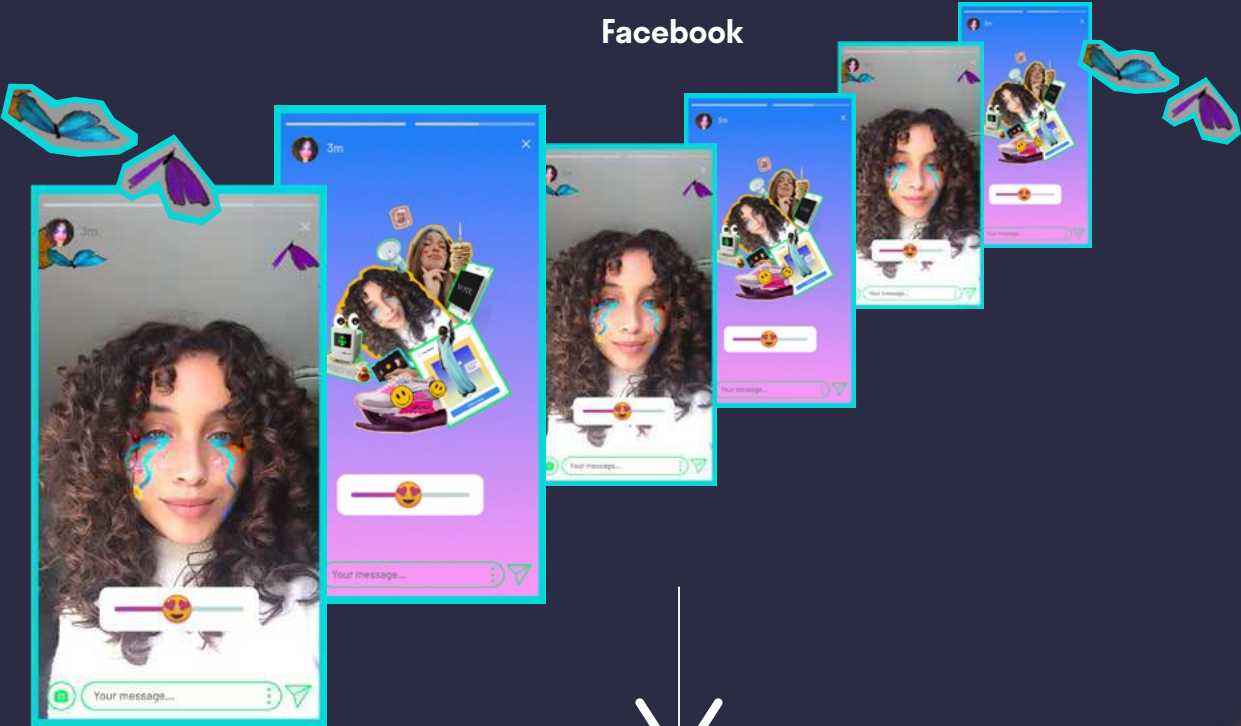


#2021 digital trends



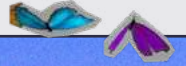
500 million  
accounts visit  
Instagram Stories  
daily.

Facebook





# The Expanding World of AR



As AR continues to blur the line between digital and reality, brands are harnessing this tech to elevate customer experience.

Though augmented reality and virtual reality have existed for some time now, they've dramatically risen in prominence over the past year. More and more savvy brands are adopting AR and VR tech to reach new audiences, build immersive experiences, and significantly increase sales. So, the question is not 'if' — but, 'how?'

Online stores now use AR to offer deeper, more realistic virtual shopping experiences to customers. This was especially valuable in 2020 as companies were scrambling to find suitable ways to market and sell to consumers under shelter-in-place protocols. Notable adopters include Mulberry, BMW, L'oreal Paris, and IKEA, which have all deployed AR to great effect since the onset of the pandemic — and this trend is not limited to the retail sector.

## AR for entertainment and product interaction

On social media, AR filters are hugely popular and can work to drive engagement and brand awareness across multiple platforms. With the expansion of Facebook's [Spark AR Studio](#), users and brands can now create free, customized AR filters for Instagram Stories, Messenger, Facebook Stories, and Portal. This innovation has had a huge impact,





essentially birthing a new social media marketing tactic: [Instagram AR Filter campaigns](#). Users spend [an average of 75 seconds](#) interacting with AR content, which is a stellar engagement rate in the digital realm.

The application of AR extends well-beyond social media platforms, too. Amazon, for example, has made use of AR in their [View in Your Room](#) feature, which allows customers to virtually impose a product within their homes. Users are prompted to scan the room with their mobile device's camera, then simply tap where they'd like the product to be placed. And, although [62% of customers](#) prefer to physically interact with products before they buy, [AR experiences](#) like this are the next-best thing — and they'll continue to get better.

One major obstacle to the proliferation of AR and VR tech has been data usage. But, as [5G becomes more widely available](#), the use of AR and VR will become more accessible (and its benefits more pronounced). A surge in 5G-equipped mobile devices will hit the market — meaning more people will have the bandwidth to handle rich AR experiences. And, concurrently, brands will create more ephemeral content and focus on mobile-only platforms to drive engagement.

## The data privacy imperative

Companies need to be extremely mindful of [security and user privacy](#) when implementing AR technology. Augmented Reality works by 'seeing' the user and their surroundings — and it needs to collect a lot of data to function properly. Therefore, AR can gather information about who the user is and what they're doing (similarly, and more intensely than social networks). As such, AR is subject to the same scrutiny regarding data privacy that's been aimed at social media platforms in the past few years. But, nevertheless, it's still clear that AR/VR tech will continue to become more widespread and impactful in 2021 and beyond.





# #2021 digital trends

“Augmented reality bridges the gap between the real-world and the digital world, and gives brands the opportunity to explore conversational commerce through compelling storytelling. If brands aren’t exploring augmented reality activations now, then they might miss a huge opportunity.”

— Ryan Howell,  
Co-founder & CEO  
of M-XR





# Data privacy: Under the microscope



Two years after Cambridge Analytica, personal data is still at the forefront of the conversation.

What do Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z have in common? They all care vehemently about what companies do with their data. In a recent [survey by Transcend](#), a staggering 98% of American consumers agreed that data privacy is an important issue to them. The results were uniform across demographics, making one thing very clear: privacy is on everyone's mind (not just the older, wealthier bracket). The pandemic has only accelerated these concerns, which marked 2020 as a significant year for data management.

As businesses face new technological challenges amid COVID-19, the topic of privacy has drawn an increasingly bright spotlight. By the end of 2019, a firm [majority of consumers \(76%\)](#) were uncomfortable with the way tech/social media companies were using their personal data. Since then, this sensitivity regarding data privacy has only been growing — and companies are responding accordingly.

## New initiatives, new platforms

In January 2020, Google shook up the marketing world by stating its plan to [phase out third-party cookies in Chrome](#) by 2022. In doing so, Chrome will join Safari and Firefox, which already block third-party cookies. Then,



Apple announced that, come 2021, [Identifier for Advertisers \(IDFA\)](#) — which is used for marketing attribution — will not track mobile users who haven't expressly opted in (essentially crippling the feature). What does all this indicate? That, by popular demand, consumers are finally gaining more control over their personal information and the trail of data they leave online.



# data # privacy

In a PwC poll, [84% of respondents](#) said they would switch services if they don't trust how a company uses their personal data.

2020 has also seen rapid growth in the market for [Customer Data Platforms \(CDP\)](#) — and this trend will continue to extend through 2021. Why? Fragmented data from disconnected sources poses a significant challenge for data-driven organizations. And CDPs step in to resolve this modern pain point. It's so painful, in fact, that ['bad data' costs U.S. businesses around \\$3 trillion every year](#). Given this, the need for unified, cohesive customer data has become a mission-critical endeavor.

## A paradigm shift for digital marketers

The recent uproar surrounding [TikTok's potential threats to data privacy](#) has made people even more aware (and suspicious) of what their smartphone apps can access. This, in turn, is leading more people to demand greater privacy — especially in the social media sphere. And, as the TikTok headlines spurred a new focus on data privacy from an international standpoint, there's a good chance we'll be seeing some regulatory policies sprout from this.

As 2020 comes to an end, companies need to have privacy at the forefront of their digital marketing mentality and gameplan. The ecosystem is being rebuilt from the ground up, with trust and transparency making up two of its core pillars. Marketers will have to go back to the drawing board and start rethinking the new stream of brand revenue in a post-cookie world. But those that embrace this shift can position themselves to succeed, as regulatory measures will make it a level playing field.







#2021 digital trends



“As I think about the future of the internet, I believe a privacy-focused communications platform will become even more important than today’s open platforms.”

— Mark Zuckerberg





## Niche SoMe platforms: A broader horizon



Branching out and building a presence on niche networks can be the key to unlocking valuable new audiences.

Social media evolves rapidly (as anyone who works in the space has surely noticed). Yet a handful of social channels have consistently dominated over the past several years, giving the appearance of stability. But, even with this dominance of the 'Big 5', you should never get too comfortable in social media marketing. Yes, Facebook and Instagram are powerhouses, but TikTok came out of nowhere in the back half of 2019 and soared to 800 million active users in 2020 — illustrating the importance of staying agile.

### 'Medium as message'

Previously, the assumption had been that, when it comes to social media, you should focus on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and possibly Pinterest. However, the explosion of TikTok has reignited the topic of how to use niche platforms outside of the 'Big 5' to strategically reach new audiences. Up-and-coming channels like TikTok, Twitch, and Houseparty can provide opportunities to tap into fresh segments while also harboring a unique culture that allows you to reach your target audience in creative new ways.



Diversifying across SoMe channels doesn't mean copy/pasting the same post or ad on each platform (and if you're currently doing this, you need to reconsider your approach). Rather, it's about understanding the differences between platforms, then tailoring your tone and strategy accordingly. Your messaging and content should depend on the interests, demographics, and culture within each social channel. Going this extra mile is what will make your niche SoMe efforts truly worthwhile.

## The perks of going niche (and when not to)

Getting in on the 'ground floor' of newer platforms means it'll be easier to rise through the ranks before the platform gets too crowded. You'll have less competition and, therefore, more opportunity to reach your intended audience. Furthermore, running ads on niche platforms is often less expensive (again due to less competition). Not to mention, [new research indicates](#) that users have a more positive sentiment toward ads on TikTok than any other platform. Plus, you'll enjoy higher levels of organic search traffic on smaller channels, which has been pared down on the larger networks.

That being said, it's also important to acknowledge when your brand *doesn't* align with a given platform. Not every company needs to be on every social channel. And, while you may be able to 'shoehorn it,' the time and effort probably won't be worth it if you're not able to engage authentically. At the end of the day, a certain degree of marketing intuition will be required.

It's also okay to focus on one specific channel, mastering that space — especially if it's already working well. But you should always keep a mindful eye out for rising platforms and take some time to experiment with them. Remember, we live in an era of 'Evolve or Dissolve' — and marketing is in a constant state of adapting to the latest developments. You never know when a newcomer network will turn into the next big thing. Or, at the very least, the next big thing for your brand.





## #2021 digital trends

“Advertisers and agencies need to develop a more quantified understanding of ‘medium as message’ and the impact different media channels and platform choices can have on their brand goals.”

— Duncan Southgate,  
Global Brand Director of  
Media at Kantar.



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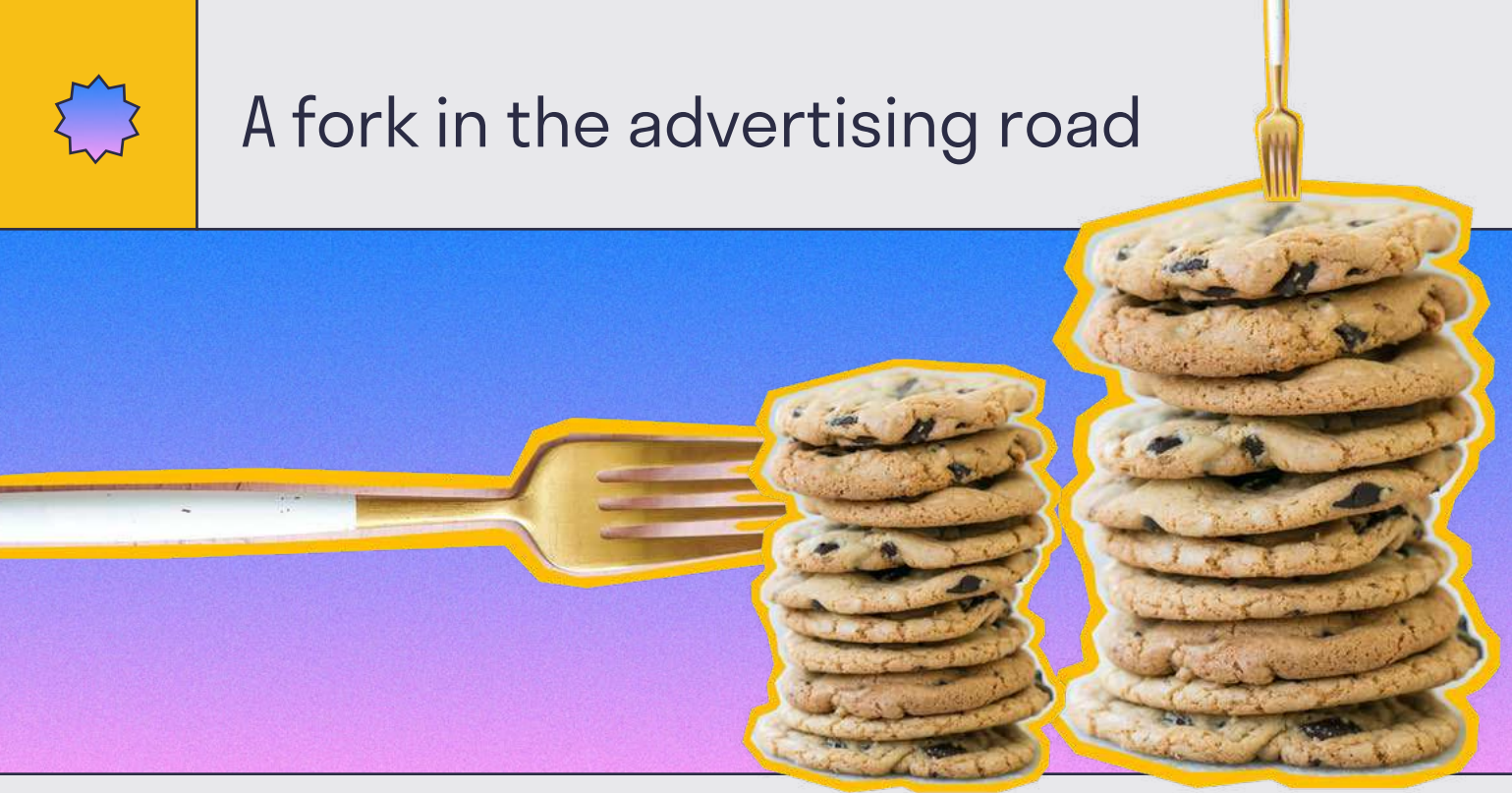
EXCUSES

EXCUSES





# A fork in the advertising road



Personalization has grown increasingly necessary — but with new data privacy regulations, a strategy shift may soon be required.

Today, personalization plays a key role in the effectiveness of digital marketing and advertising. In fact, 80% of consumers are more likely to make a purchase when they are presented with a personalized experience. Given this, it seems obvious that brands should be doing everything they can to make their ads as personalized as possible. And many are — but the complete picture, especially in regards to the future, is more complicated.


With the latest advancements in AdTech (e.g. AI, Machine Learning), personalization has become a sophisticated science. And, when it comes to social media ads, marketers will likely continue to pursue deeper personalization and more localized targeting — trading reach for relevance. However, there's a foreseeable issue looming: much of the current hyper-relevant targeting capabilities rely on personal data and cookies to better-understand the user... and this type of data may be on its way out.



## Privacy vs. personalization: Can they coexist?

76% of internet users are not comfortable with how tech companies are handling their personal data — and over 25% are using ad blockers. In response, Google launched Consent Mode in 2020 in an attempt to reconcile data privacy and data-driven digital marketing. This move is representative of the larger overall trend toward protecting privacy and giving people more control over their personal data.

While this shift can be considered a step in the right direction, it can also hinder marketers' abilities to target, measure, and deliver relevant ads. But few would argue that personalized marketing is dying. Rather, it's evolving. After all, many consumers are willing to share their data in exchange for personalization — but it must be from a place of trust and transparency. So, as third-party cookies are phased out and consent opt-ins are ushered in, the need to adapt is imminent.



↘  
**Michael Schoen,**  
SVP & GM,  
Marketing Solutions at  
Neustar.

# aFork # inThe # advertising # Road

“All in all, it’s a much better ecosystem than what we have today because it’s built with trust, privacy, transparency, and industry collaboration at its core.”

## But wait, there's more...

There's another obstacle in the way of effective advertising that needs to be addressed: consumers have become very skeptical toward what they see in their feeds. 70% of people in the UK reportedly don't trust what they see on social networks (which includes branded posts and ads). Continuing on that note, only 14% would trust advertisements as a valid source of information about a company.

With distrust running high, marketers are now tasked with the challenge of winning skeptics over. How? While there's no one-size-fits-all approach, we can look to other concepts throughout this handbook for insights. So far, we've emphasized the value of authenticity, transparency, community, and brand activism in today's landscape. And, if you're looking for ways to build trust in 2021, these themes are all great places to start.





#2021 digital trends



The estimated loss  
of revenue due  
to ad blocking  
is expected to  
increase to  
\$2.12 billion  
in 2020.



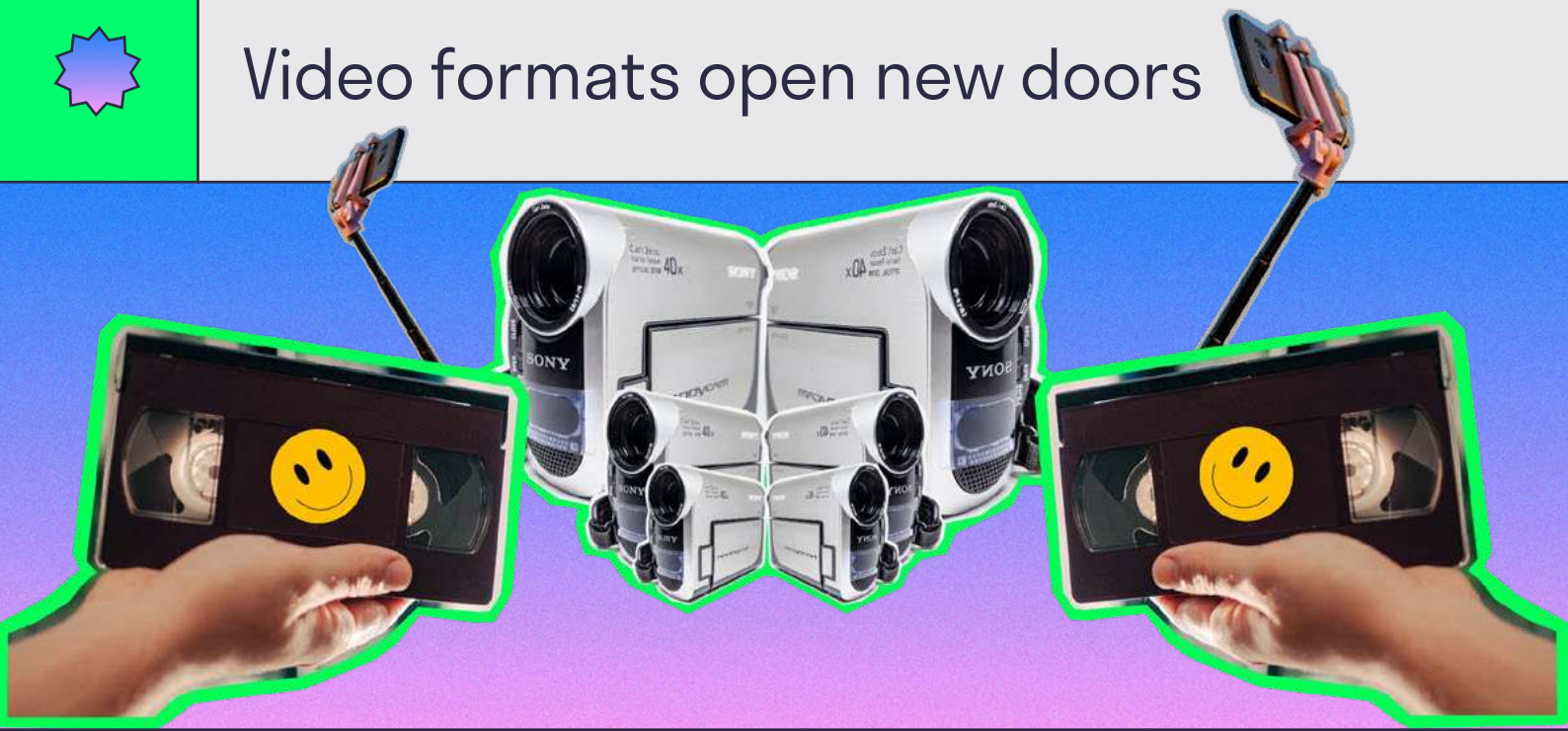
Statista, 2018







# Video formats open new doors



Video continues to be an essential online medium — and new formats allow for increased interactivity and engagement.

For years, video has been steadily rising as the dominant form of online content. Cisco estimates that, by 2022, video streaming will comprise over 80% of consumer internet traffic. Given this, it's no surprise 92% of marketers agree that video is an integral piece of their overall strategy. But it's not just video in general that's on the rise. Technology is expanding the number of video formats available — increasing engagement, heightening user expectations, and allowing brands to cut through the noise more effectively than with other visual content.

## 50 shades of video

Today, it's not enough to simply talk about 'video' — as it now comes in so many different shapes and sizes (both figuratively and literally). There's vertical video, shoppable video, 360° video, personalized video, AR video, animated video, stories...the list goes on. And this explosion of new formats has not only changed the way brands utilize video — it's also elevated consumer expectations. Creativity, innovation, and interactive storytelling are a must if brands want to keep viewers engaged and enhance their video marketing footprint. People have now come to expect brands to use video in their social content and advertising, with video getting





ever-more engagement on social networks. In the previous section on ephemeral content, we discussed the surge in ‘Stories’ across social media platforms (and how effective these bite-sized clips can be when it comes to engaging your audience).



#video #formats #open #new #doors

Among Millennials and Gen Z, 25% look for Stories of the products and services they’re interested in buying.

To reiterate, stories don’t need to have high production value. Rather, posting authentic/casual video clips can actually resonate even more. Plus, stories can provide a direct line to your products or services via the ‘Swipe Up’ feature (not to mention the other interactive elements you can add, including polls, questions, quizzes, etc.). And, although only 2-5% of users will swipe through, those that do have a high chance of completing your final call-to-action.

## Quantity vs. quality views

When assessing video stats, particularly on social media, it’s important to note that not all views are necessarily *quality* views. A study by Locowise found that 78.2% of all Facebook video views were from autoplays (i.e. automatically initiated from passive newsfeed scrolling). This is indicative that not all views are created equal — and, with attention spans at an all-time low, brands must strive to create truly compelling video content that hooks the viewer within the first few seconds. Furthermore, studies have shown a sharp drop-off in video engagement around the two-minute mark. So, when it comes to creating videos, the notion of ‘short-and-sweet’ seems to be the prevailing theme.

As we move forward into 2021, there’s no doubt that video will remain an essential tool in the digital marketing toolbox. And, as consumers demand more video content (delivered in more engaging, interactive formats), marketers must ask themselves: how can today’s video format evolution be used to accelerate the customer journey? The answer won’t be simple — or the same for every brand — but it’s the key to unlocking the full potential of video marketing both now and in the future.





#2021 digital trends

In 2021, people will  
spend an average  
of 100 minutes  
per day watching  
online videos.

MarketingCharts





# Social media as ‘public relations 2.0’



While social media is well-known for marketing, it’s also an integral piece of modern PR — and are the two even separate?

By now, most companies are already using social media as a marketing channel. Why? Many would probably say that it’s a way to connect with their audience, build relationships, frame their brand in a positive light, and, most importantly, to remain visible. But...isn’t that the job of public relations?

Indeed — which is why social media needs to be thought of as a PR/communications channel as well. And, while the two fields are closely related, it’s important to understand what it means to view social media from a PR perspective.

## The new face of PR

It would be a mistake for businesses to regard social media simply as an advertising platform. Rather, it has become an integral part of the communication mix to share relevant content with target audiences. ‘Social Media PR’ goes beyond posting press releases on social networks: it’s a dynamic tool to keep your finger on the pulse of public opinion, learning about your customer’s preferences, and using this information to tailor future initiatives.



Social media is also increasingly used by journalists as a direct research/ feedback channel. For example, journalists often turn to Twitter to gauge sentiment, source quotes, and scan public commentary to get a feel for the ‘climate’ surrounding a given topic. All things considered, social media has become a standalone news outlet in its own right and an indispensable part of the PR/communication ecosystem.



**Michelle Mekky,**

President & Founder of Mekky Media Relations.

#SoMe #as #PublicRelations #2.0

“We learned how to write on typewriters when I was in high school. So trust me when I say social media has changed everything about this industry.”

## Influencers, ambassadors, and word-of-mouth

Businesses are no longer the sole creators of a brand: it’s co-created by consumers, shared through experiences, and defined by the results of online searches and conversations. Social media has given a tremendous amount of influence to individuals, whose voice can now be heard by thousands (if not millions) on popular social platforms — hence, the rise of the ‘Influencer.’

Today, bloggers, influencers, and brand ambassadors are vital ‘opinion leaders’. We are witnessing the democratization of PR, where word-of-mouth and social proof are key catalysts for brand growth and positive perception in the public eye.

## They’re talking...but are you listening?

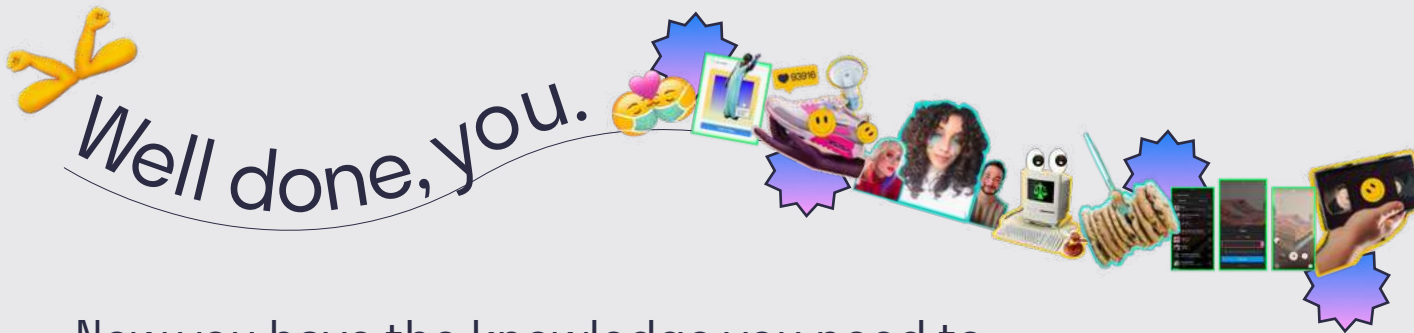
To take full advantage of the role social media should play in your overall strategy, you’ll need to have social media listening in place. This will reveal what’s being said about your brand (for better or worse), providing you with the insight to react to the word on the street. And, when executed well, social listening can have a profound impact on your ability to understand customers — and the benefits of that go without saying.







# Moving forward



Now you have the knowledge you need to raise your game on social media and absolutely crush it in 2021.

Now you know the ins and outs of fleeting content, 'real fake' AR, and hyper-personalized ad campaigns, to name a few.

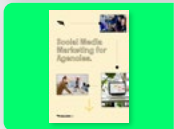
And *right now* would be as good a time as any to read one of our other helpful eBooks.



[Our Fluff-Free Guide to Instagram Marketing](#)



[The \*Easy as Pie\* Guide to Measuring Social Media ROI](#)



[Your Social Media Marketing Guide for Agencies](#)

Or...

Well, if you really want to market smarter, build your following, and manage your social channels all in one place, then...





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