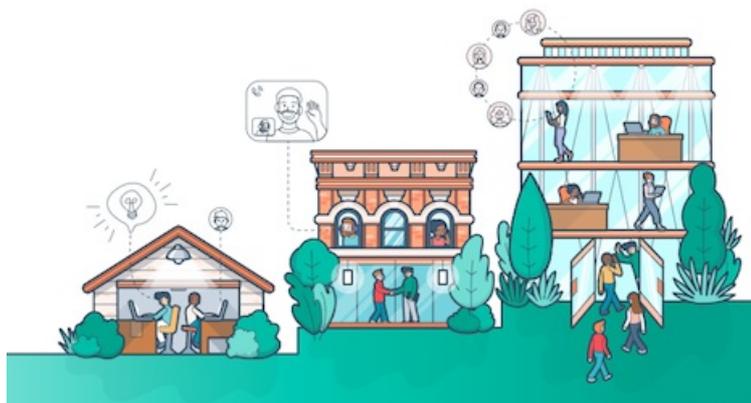


MARKETING

## 2021's ultimate marketing trend: the consumer is king

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2021 Social Media Trends. Image credit: Hubspot

By NORA HOWE

For brands across all sectors to succeed in 2021, consumers must be at the center of their marketing strategies.

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Brands that understand their consumers' motivations, needs, ideas and conversations will be the ones that not only survive but succeed, according to a new study by [Hubspot](#) and [Talkwalker](#). The trends included in the [2021 Social Media Trends](#) report, defined by experts and audiences, are ranked from what consumers believe will be the least impactful to the most impactful.

"Luxury brands will have to continue to prove to younger audiences that they can walk the walk when it comes to believing in the issues important to their audiences," said Todd Grossman, CEO Americas at Talkwalker. "Their digital marketing efforts will need to provide value any way they can.

"That could include helpful information, taking action on issues important to their customers, or even the humor seen in meme marketing," he said. "Delivering this value to their digital audiences will become a pivotal barometer of their future marketing successes."

The insights taken from Talkwalker Analytics and Talkwalker Quick Search between July 2019 and August 2020 were gathered from news sites, social media channels, blogs and forums.

### Top 10 trends for 2021

According to consumers, remixing is the new form of user generated content, such as Tik Tok and Instagram Reels. Due to the pandemic, people were restricted in the content they created, but they still had the tools to reinvent it.

With fewer technical restrictions, remixing makes content creation easier. Companies will look to provide users with more creative outlets, providing templates, tools and assets thus enabling organic connections with their consumers.

The implementation of the four Cs of COVID-19 community, contactless, cleanliness and compassion will be an integral part of future brand strategy. According to the report, consumers are not likely to forget the impact of the pandemic, and brands must adapt their communication and marketing strategies with this in mind.

Mememes will become a large player for brands as the number eight trend, according to consumers. The mention of mememes increased 26 percent - from 19.8M mentions in August 2019 to 24.9M in July 2020. Memetic media will likely be used to persuade consumers, both on high charged topics as well as topics that could directly impact a brand.

Especially as the world reels from the pandemic, nostalgic marketing will be an important tactic for brands to utilize in order to connect with their consumers. By associating positive memories to a brand, that sense of positivity will build an emotional relationship between companies and consumers.

Bygone are the days of infomercials and direct response advertising. Marketing goes both ways, and brands can no longer just tell consumers what to buy and hope they succeed. Instead, brands must open the door for conversations and connections - allowing consumers to build trust and relationships with brands. According to consumers, brands will succeed in 2021 as long as they lean away from sales pitches and toward storytelling and engagement.

Due to the pandemic, many people turned to video games as a distraction and a way of coping with the lack of physical social interaction.

Over a year, the number of people who identified as gamers increased by 32 percent, from 31.1M in August 2019 to 41.2M in July 2020. Consumers and experts believe that the stigma associated with gaming will lift in 2021 and brands will become more focused on this community.

Similar to nostalgic marketing, next year will likely see a trend in old-school marketing.

While digital will remain at the forefront of brand marketing, brands will begin recycling simpler ways of engaging their markets such as through newspapers or podcasts. Although these tactics cannot compare to recent developments, they are easy for brands to establish and easy for customers to consume.

A predominant element of 2021 marketing strategies is the idea of adapting to changes occurring in the world, especially this year. This is no different for social media giants like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. According to the report, these platforms may add new features and will likely adapt to trends in their own ways, but their significance will not fade.

The rise of digital disinformation will be the second most impactful trend of 2021.

Since February 2020, mentions of fake news, misinformation and conspiracy theories have increased dramatically. Next year, brands and social media channels will likely focus on highlighting the truth and silencing false information.

Finally, the impact of socially conscious audiences is expected to be the most effective trend next year.

Politics, equality, education, mental health, finance and changing food trends are all critical topics to Generations Z and Alpha. In terms of how this will affect the landscape, brands will begin repositioning themselves toward cause-driven messaging.

This is not a one and done deal, either.

Brands that act superficially within socially conscious marketing will fail when they are inevitably called out by consumers. However, brands that authentically engage with the issues that matter will succeed, especially as younger consumers increase their spending power.

Listening to the customers

Ultimately, all of the trends expected by the Talkwalker and Hubspot report share one element: the consumer is the driving factor. Historically, brands set the trends and dictated the purchasing behavior of their markets. Now, it is the responsibility of the brands to listen to customer voices, which are emphasizing needs for authenticity and transparency.

Stella McCartney has leveraged her platform for the voices of women of color and encouraged individuals to consider how they can shift towards a sustainable future.

Through a recent video series on the topic of climate change, she and her renowned brand have opened the conversation for the luxury fashion world. Climate change has been a theme for her eponymous British label in past campaigns, and continues to permeate the industry as brands have begun shifting their strategies with regards to social and environmental consciousness ([see story](#)).

The demand for brand purpose is only getting stronger.

Gone are the days of "do no harm" this is a new age of "do good" that is here to stay. Consumers are demanding brands add value beyond the products and services they sell. They have strong expectations that the brands they support will take a stand on the important social issues of our time ([see story](#)).

"Unlock your understanding of one of these trends, say meme marketing for example, and you begin to further understand how other trends like nostalgia marketing or socially conscious audiences work as well," said Mr. Grossman. "The rewards for brands to do even just one of these trends well are really just the beginning of how they can continue to engage and connect with audiences."

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