

itb

The Power of Influence

INSIGHTS + TRENDS

QUARTERLY REVIEW

VOLUME 1

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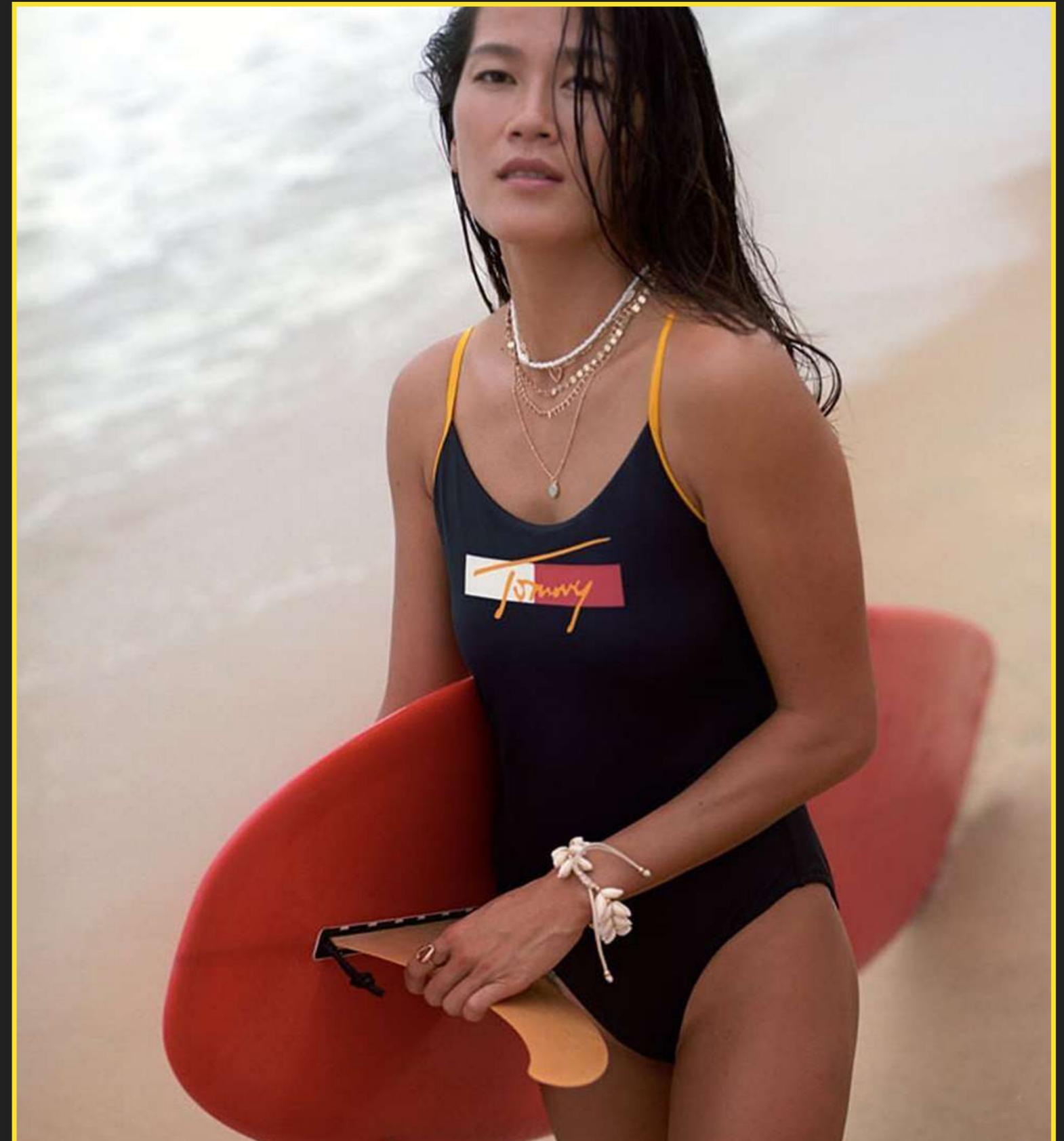
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INTRODUCTION

As we close the first quarter of 2021, we take a look at some of the key consumer and content trends. From social gaming and conscious consumerism to new-age wellness and audio-social platforms, we've highlighted the movements that matter and the implication for brands and the world of influence.



#1 Conscious Consumerism

OUR PERSPECTIVE

Conscious consumerism is on the rise as individuals increasingly look for brands they can trust and who mirror their values (PWC, 2020). The economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, in addition to an increased sense of social and environmental responsibility, has meant consumers are ever more conscious of their shopping choices and driven increasingly by a desire to 'do good'. Purpose and values driven messaging is therefore key for brands to demonstrate their social consciousness to a more culturally attuned consumer. Influencers are playing a key role in strengthening brand trust here too, with as high as 54% of consumers saying they would have a negative opinion of brands that allow their ads to be aligned with content made by creators who don't share their values (PWC, 2020).

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS

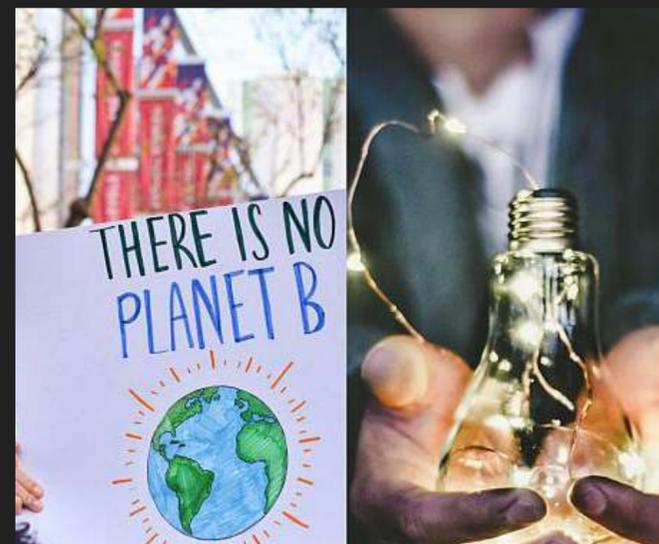
As we enter an era of accountability, brands have an opportunity to re-evaluate and clarify their proposition and purpose to retain relevance. Mostly driven by Gen Z, the movement to hold brands more accountable has been stimulated by heightened awareness around social injustice and the environmental crisis, causing consumers to place a high level of importance on values-based relationships with brands, not just transactional relationships. For example, sustainable practices are now the most sought-after component of a given business with as high as 63% of people considering a brand's sustainability reputation (PWC, 2020) before making a purchase. Since the pandemic has caused nearly 50% of this age group to either have lost their job (Pew, 2020), this group will likely become more vocal about the issues that matter to them. Transparency is especially key to connect with the Gen-Z demographic as they are seeking more open and honest sharing of information about how their product was made and by who. More frequent, transparent and authentic online interactions can therefore win their trust.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR INFLUENCE

Individuals have become more selective about who they follow and why, meaning that they are putting more emphasis on the tangible value of celebrities and influencers in terms of what they can bring to their feeds. Brands can look to create effective talent and influencer strategies by ensuring there is an alignment of values and beliefs with those who advocate for them. Partnering with those who are specialists in an area and can bring authority and credibility to a brands messaging is key. Last year, category experts such as medical professionals were trending on TikTok and Instagram for democratising information in their specialism and combatting misinformation. Brands should also be looking to emulate the behaviours of this new wave of influencers, considering empathy and advocacy as key elements to integrate within their messaging for successful creator campaigns in 2021, consumers evidently want to be part of encouraging change and brands should therefore be looking to help create with them and not just for them. Understanding your audience and what's important to them can help you engage the right influencers to authentically tap into these conversations.

71%

Of respondents agreed if a brand looks like it puts profit over people, they'll lose trust in that brand forever (Edelman, 2020)



40%

Of consumers are more likely to trust a brand that features an influencer they know (PWC, 2020)



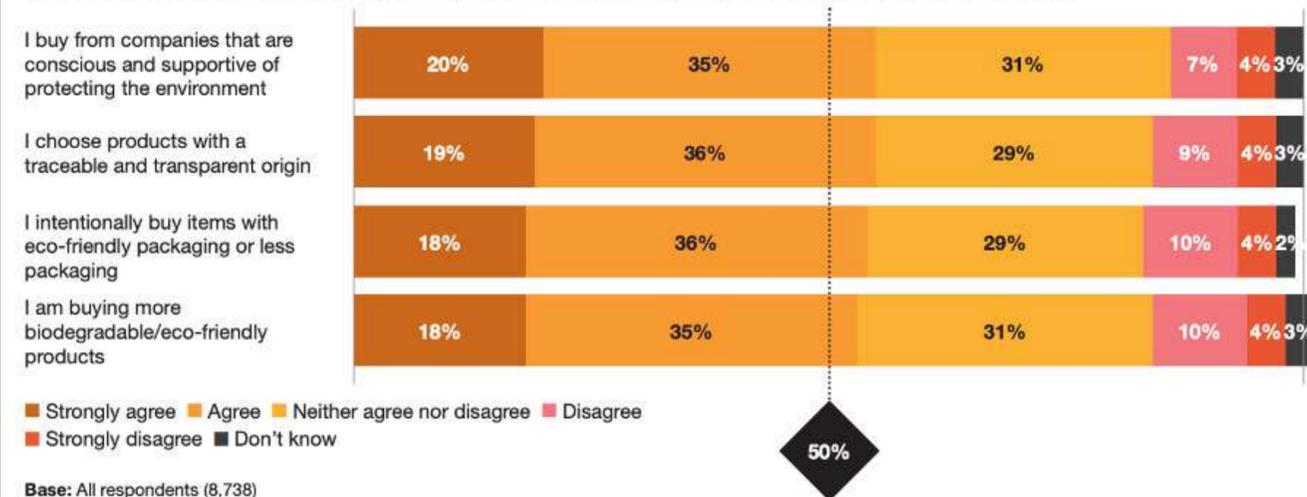
36%

Of influencer-following consumers saying they are now following a more diverse set of individuals (PWC, 2020)



Exhibit 3: Global consumer survey shows more than half value sustainability

Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements around shopping sustainability.



Base: All respondents (8,738)

Source: PwC's Global Consumer Insights Pulse Survey, March 2021

INFLUENCERS TO WATCH



Leah Thomas
@greengirlleah

Environmentalist/Eco-Creative
Age: 31

One To Watch:

Based in Southern California, Leah is highly selective with brand partnerships highly as someone who is highly passionate about advocating for and exploring the relationship between social justice and environmentalism.



Stephanie Yeboah
@stephanieyeboah

Eco- Conscious + Body Positive Advocate
Age: 31

One To Watch:

Multi-award-winning plus-size style blogger, author, freelance journalist, public speaker & fat acceptance advocate from London who you can find talking about her plants and working with conscious brands to help people overcome adversity



Paul Nicklen
@paulnicklen

Marine Biologist + Filmmaker
Age: 52

One To Watch:

Co-Founder of Sea Legacy and a contributor for National Geographic, Paul is an acclaimed photographer and conservationist paving the way for consumers to hold brands responsible for their actions that are impacting the environment.



Venetia La Manna
@venetialamanna

Podcaster + fair fashion campaigner
Age: n/a

One To Watch:

Host of All The Small Things and Co-Founder of sustainable apparel label, Remember Who Made Them, Venetia is a London based presenter, creator and sustainability activist who discuss all things food, wellbeing and the planet.



Benji
@benji_lookbook

Inclusion + Wellbeing Advocate
Age: 25

One To Watch:

Benji is a values-driven and inclusion TikTok influencer who shares useful tips on TikTok to encourage and provide a safe inclusion and well-being learning space based in London.

CASE STUDIES

H&M CONSCIOUS



H&M engaged and partnered 13 resonant fashion influencers with 4 expert voices across 8 markets from the eco-conscious community to take part in a series of IGTVs. Through open conversations, the influencers discussed the innovations behind the clothes in an approachable way and learned about the steps we can all take on the journey towards a more sustainable fashion future. In addition, influencers posted hero in-feed posts of fashion-led images, IG Story frames amplify key messaging/material innovations and IG Reels to share lighthearted styling inspiration. The partnership between the carefully selected credible influencers and experts increased authenticity and positive sentiment for the brand through its educational and inspirational tone and content.

LA MER



La Mer partnered with the Blue Heart Oceans Fund to help support ocean conservation projects around the world that they have promoted through influencer partnerships. La Mer used influencer marketing to tell the story of their natural ingredient in its products that is protecting wildlife. The brand received high engagement and spread awareness of the cause.

SMIRNOFF VODKA



Smirnoff Vodka celebrated Women's History Month through a series of virtual workouts that ended with a happy hour discussion showcasing several celebrities. For the virtual workouts, the brand partnered with a Black women-owned small business in Washington fitness studio called SideBarre to engage consumers in the pandemic who couldn't access a gym whilst in turn supported U.S. sales by showcasing how viewers make cocktails. Smirnoff's goal was to cultivate good will among consumers urging people to support local businesses.

#2 The Rise of Micro Collaborations

OUR PERSPECTIVE

One of the more interesting things to come out of last year was the rise in brand partnerships and collaborations between local and global brands. Partnerships were so prominent, that brands interacting with other organisations came out as one of the top seven trends during the pandemic (Deloitte). Co-branding is now seen as an important strategy for marketers - especially those in retail - to grow their customer base and maintain a relevance and competitive edge in the market. It is no longer a space limited to just big brands and signing blockbuster contracts with renowned designers, but now a haven for smaller brands too.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS

Barriers to entry have lowered and the rise of social media has shifted incentives, allowing for plenty of opportunities for small-scope collaborations to flourish. During the pandemic, "community" became a key focus for brands and as a result we saw many partnerships with charity organisations. It is through these examples that we have seen the real value of collaborations when done right. Partnerships between large brands and smaller brands, or with emerging designers, allow for more creative and unexpected designs and product. Since large brands are margin-driven, creativity can suffer in the process in favour of something more commercially viable. Small brands are able to take more risks and more heavily rely on social media as a sales and marketing tool. When partnering with them, large brands can leverage this flexibility and agility to their benefit to move forward and enter new arenas they previously found difficult such as sustainability.

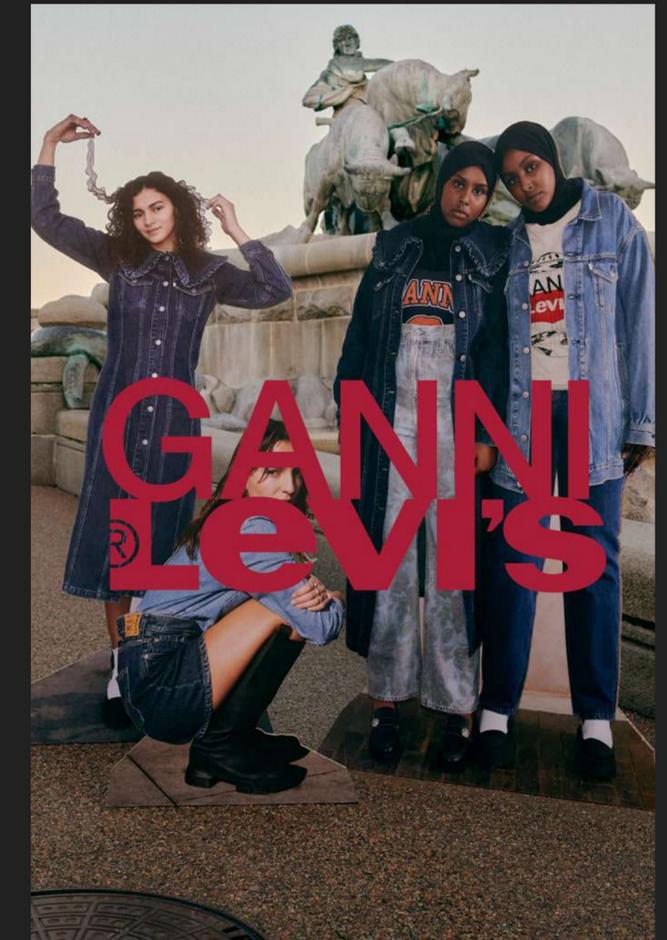
WHAT IT MEANS FOR INFLUENCE

There has been a shift away from celebrity collaborations and toward more brand-on-brand partnerships or with individuals who are making an impact in their communities. Since purpose-led relationships with consumers is the key to success in 2021 and beyond, aligning with community influencers or advocates who are focussed on human-centric narratives can be beneficial where there is a common goal in mind. To ensure such partnerships are authentic and will have longevity in the consumers eyes, it's crucial to research and vet partners carefully.

With a renewed consumer appetite to shop local and support small business and independent labels, brands can also focus their collaboration efforts in this area to show their support and forge closer ties with communities on both a local and global scale.

81%

Of brands who introduced new partnerships last year also see this as key to business post-pandemic (Deloitte, 2020)



55%

Of fashion shoppers have made a purchase based on an Instagram creator's post (Newberry, C. 2021)



36%

Of consumers say retailers need to do more to offer personalised experiences (Retail Touch Points, 2020)



CASE STUDIES

TERVIS X IVORY ELLA



Both brands are built around a commitment to sustainability, stewardship, and protecting wildlife, that created the perfect opportunity to work together towards this goal. Ivory Ella's commitment lies in protecting the elephants, Tervis is committed to preserving the oceans by reducing single-use plastics. From start up to unicorn in just under 4 years, Ivory Ella has over 60 million followers across social media accounts through its socially conscious narrative and people's overwhelming support and love for elephants drove the products to go viral. Tervis was able to leverage the vitality of the Ivory Ella brand to create a successful partnership.

CLARKS ORIGINALS X SPORTY & RICH



Clarks Originals and Emily Oberg's label Sporty & Rich teamed up to create sustainable and co-branded Wallabees made with leather from a tannery that's got a robust carbon offset program and use a FSC-certified natural crepe sole that's both renewable and harvested responsibly with a stamp of approval from the Forest Stewardship Council. The partnership allowed for a combined level of aesthetic appeal and cultural significance that would have otherwise been difficult to achieve on their own.

IKEA X BYREDO



This partnership allowed for a truly new creative approach to candle making where the concept of 'invisible design' was at the core of the creation of the range that encourages its users to light multiple candles at once to create a bespoke scent tailored to your preferences. With Byredo candles retailing at least £59, this collaboration demoralised the accessibility to Byredo at just £5 per candle. IKEA x Byredo collection was designed to tap into memories, emotions and elevate our home experiences during a year where we were spending more time than ever.

#3 Social Gaming

OUR PERSPECTIVE

The future of gaming is looking bright, especially after a year following 'stay at home' mandates which has allowed the category to not only continue as normal but to thrive. In the last twelve months, Gen Z's influence has taken centre stage, with gaming capturing the attention of this cohort and contributing to the creation of some of the biggest cultural moments like Travis Scott's Fortnite concert or the phenomenal success of Animal Crossing and it's many branded integrations. Gaming is making the most of the closure of physical retail spaces and integrating e-commerce into its experience more than ever (PwC, 2020). The increase in engagement can also be attributed to an increase in mobile gaming, accelerated by our entry into the 5G era in which on-the-go users now have seamless access to content that would usually be difficult to stream. This trend emphasises the important role gaming now plays in culture as a whole and its opportunity for brands to forge a more intimate relationship with Gen Z, fusing like-minded and passionate communities together.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS

Last year Twitter reported a 75% Increase in Gaming-Related Tweets (Twitter, 2020), with esports being the third most followed gaming topic. Since eSports is now a genuine rival for traditional sports in terms of fan engagement - which also relates to eSports stars, who are now becoming major celebrities in their own right - there is an opportunity for brands to consider engaging with this online community instead of traditional sports mediums. The "rise of athlete influence" has been cited as one of Nielsen's five global sports marketing trends for 2021 with athlete advocacy posts generating 63% more engagement for brands compared to other social content (Nielsen, 2021). We can also expect to see more in-game, interactive tie-ins like Klarna's pop-up shop in Animal Crossing and product placement in Twitch live streams, as well as digital billboards and other connection opportunities that could provide new ways to link into the gaming cohort. The influence of gaming also extends outside the online world with a rise in cultural products inspired by the aesthetic ecosystem of the gaming world i.e. cyberpunk in fashion and beauty collaborations like MAC x Tencent which was inspired by Tencent's popular mobile game 'Honor of Kings'.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR INFLUENCE

Gaming is a lucrative business where these influencers are paid more on average than in other categories and areas of culture i.e. music - streaming platforms pay artists badly. Five of YouTube's top ten channels of 2020 were also gaming related. Lil Miquela, tweeted last month: "Gaming is replacing music as the lynchpin of emergent social scenes." Live streaming sits at the core of the gaming genre and most gamers and fans turn to Twitch to get their fill of content. In Q2 of this year, Twitch users spent an estimated 5.2 billion hours viewing content on the platform. This volume of captive eyes provides brands with a unique opportunity for mass exposure. Influencers in the streaming space are on camera for hours upon hours each week, with millions of fans logging on to watch and engage in a range of conversations. This provides an unprecedented opportunity for exposure that many brands are taking note of. Streamers aren't just playing a game, they are providing a form of entertainment to their fans, not unlike a musician on-stage at a concert or an actor/actress at an award show. With that, fans aren't just watching what these streamers are doing but are also playing close attention to what they are wearing and/or what is in the background.

75%

Increase in Gaming-Related Tweets in 2020 (Twitter 2020)



74%

Said video games helped them stay connected with their friends (Monahan, S. 2021)



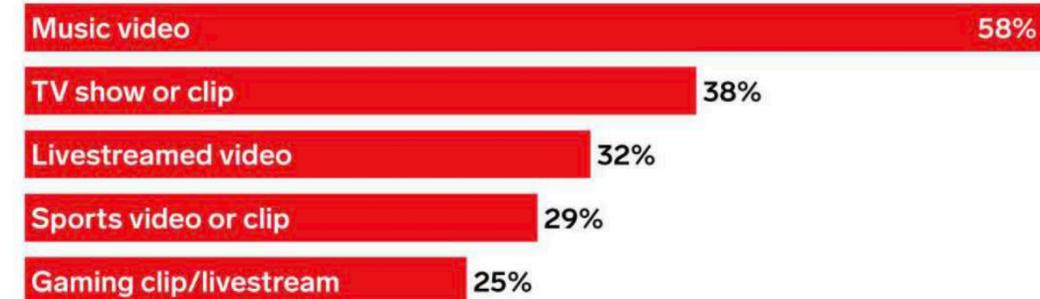
68%

Of Gen-Z men said gaming was an important part of their identity (Monahan, S. 2021)



Types of Content Watched on YouTube by YouTube Users Worldwide, Q3 2020

% of respondents



Note: n=125,688 ages 16-64 who engage on YouTube or use the YouTube app; in the past month

Source: GlobalWebIndex, "Entertainment 2021," Jan 14, 2021

INFLUENCERS TO WATCH



SypherPK
@sypherpk

Streaming + Gaming Personality
Age: 24

One To Watch:

The full-time streamer is known for his talent in Fortnite and Call of Duty, but is really a variety gamer at heart. Sypher is one of the few streamers who has successful developed content creation capabilities, maintaining 5 YouTube channels (including one for his dogs), and recently establishing his own production company.



AvaGG
@AvaGG

Broadcaster + Twitch Star
Age: 31

One To Watch:

A Canadian-American, Ava is a true variety streamer that not only plays a variety of games, but also hosts Just Chatting, Twitch Sing, and Twitch Creative streams. A member of Queens Gaming, Ava is an active advocate for women's equality, as well as animal rights.



Swagg
@swagg

YouTube Gamer
Age: 24

One To Watch:

A rising star in gaming, the FaZe Clan member is at the forefront of improving diversity in gaming. The pro Call of Duty player is just 24 years old, with lots of potential for growth.



Xmiramira
@Xmiramira

YouTuber + Twitch streamer
Age: xx

One To Watch:

Mira has been streaming on Twitch since 2015, primarily focusing on The Sims. Mira is also a Twitch partner and winner of season 1 of the TBS show Spark'd. Mira took the initiative to create The Melanin Pack within Sims 4, a skin-tone pack to expand character options, as well as the diversity forum known as the Black Simmer.



Nick Mercs
@NickMercs

Bodybuilder + eSports YouTuber
Age: 25

One To Watch:

One of, if not the most recognizable talent in the Call of Duty space, Nick received a Streamy Award for Live Streamer of the Year in 2020. With his large fanbase, Nick has frequently crossed over with fitness and sports content, and has collaborated with traditional athletes and entertainers on and off stream.

CASE STUDIES

THE NORTHFACE X GUCCI POKEMON GO



The partnership between Pokemon GO and the Northface provides users with instant fashion for avatars in the game through free promo codes. The brand brings high class camping gear to both the game and the real world across pop up shops around the world in select stores. The items include T-shirts, hats, and backpacks that can be picked up at over 100 PokéStops placed on Gucci Pins celebrating the spirit of exploration in select locations around the world

SNAPCHAT X BITMOJI TV



Snapchat is introducing 'Bitmoji TV' to feature Bitmoji characters in an animated series to capitalise on the personalisation and engagement of Bitmoji. Snapchat's goal is to become the world's avatar and give people a digital version of themselves that represents them to stand apart from competitors like TikTok and Instagram.

BALENCIAGA X AFTERWORLD THE AGE OF TOMORROW



Balenciaga released their fashion collection in the form of a video game, Afterworld: The Age of Tomorrow, showing players travel through a future world with avatars dressed in ripped jeans and metal-armor boots. Viewers participate in a game that has different levels showcasing the future of clothing, where "nature and youth co-exist" to offer garments that can be repurposed and last forever.

#4 New Age Wellness

OUR PERSPECTIVE

In many ways, 2020 marked the end of one era and the beginning of the next, especially from an astrological point of view – we have entered the age of Aquarius. Among a younger audience, we have seen a massive resurgence of interest in astrology, in reaction especially to times of extreme stress. As a culture, we have shifted towards mindfulness regimes for optimum well-being and Gen Z are trying to make sense of the world and discover a belief system to help find their place in it. Since screen time has increased, consumers have experienced a social media hangover and are looking to align themselves with this new and unfiltered wellness social landscape to dream positively about the future and feel better at the moment.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS

Between March to July, searches including the term “manifesting” skyrocketed on Google by 669 percent and “shut up I’m manifesting” became among the defining memes of 2020 (Jennings, R. 2020). This mystical driven culture is already being capitalised on and integrated by fashion labels who are offering shopping recommendations tailored to capture this audience of horoscope followers. Snapchat is also joining the movement through the introduction of Astrological Profiles, allowing users to access insights into their star sign. There are many opportunities for brands to integrate this trend into their marketing to help address this group’s concerns, interests and beliefs, but it needs to be done authentically and with care, since a mistake or lack of understanding around star signs could be damaging and lose the trust of this cohort.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR INFLUENCE

Consumers, especially Gen Z, are prioritising their health and have realised that likes and followers can have a negative impact on their self-worth and self-confidence, so they are de-cluttering their feeds and tuning out of things that don’t “make them feel good”. Zodiacs are providing escapism from everyday reality that is both entertaining and personalised, so it can be a powerful tool if brands can align themselves with experts and passionate advocates in this space. After a year of little optimism, it is important that brands keep this trend and associated influencers in mind to prioritise the well-being of their customers after a mental health crisis. After all, 1 out of 3 agree “In this time of instability in the world, I turn to astrology to make sense of things” (Business Wire, 2019).

43%

Would make a big life decision based on a horoscope/tarot card reading



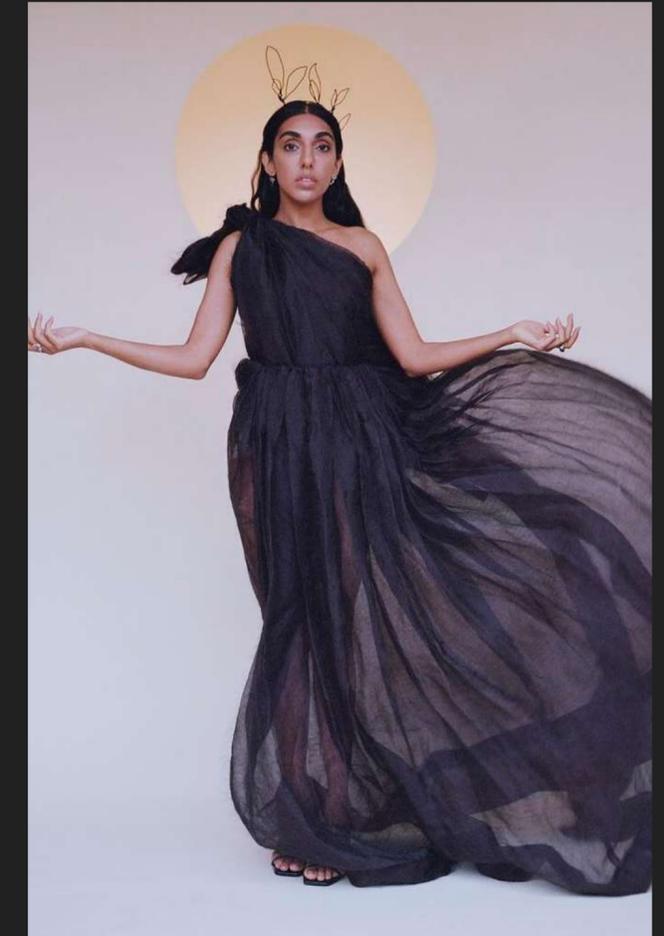
41%

Agree “People can believe in religion, spirituality, and occult practices all at the same time”

JUST A REMINDER TO SET BOUNDARIES. AUDACITY IS AT AN ALL TIME HIGH.

May you attract people who match your higher vibration.

- Leah Belle



WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

february 3, 2020 -

february 9, 2020

mercury retrograde is coming!

25%

Of millennials agree that horoscopes and astrology influence their purchasing decisions (Business Wire, 2019)



INFLUENCERS TO WATCH



Portia Ferrari
@theraripriestx

Divination Practitioner + Presenter
Age: n/a

One To Watch:

Portia is a creative consultant for Part of O.G Studios who is passionate about divination practice and astrology as a way of helping responding to the unpredictability of the world to increase clarity so her followers can make better decisions.



Chris Hall
@chrstoph.hall

Dancer + Personal Trainer
Age: n/a

One To Watch:

Lead Instructor at BODY LDN Ride Trainer at 1Rebel Personal Trainer, Chris' TikTok and Instagram brings a comedy element to millennial's approach to wellness.



Aliza Kelly
@alizakelly

Celebrity Astrologer
Age: n/a

One To Watch:

Aliza is a celebrity astrologer and author who writes horoscopes and columns for Cosmopolitan Magazine, and hosts the weekly podcast Stars Like Us that is a mixture off mythology, magick, and pop culture to remind us there is no such thing as destiny, just direction.



The Hoodwitch
@thehoodwitch

Modern Mystic
Age: n/a

One To Watch:

Host of All The Small Things and Co-Founder of sustainable apparel label, Remember Who Made Them, Venetia is a London based presenter, creator and sustainability activist who discuss all things food, wellbeing and the planet.



Lalah Delia
@lalahdelia

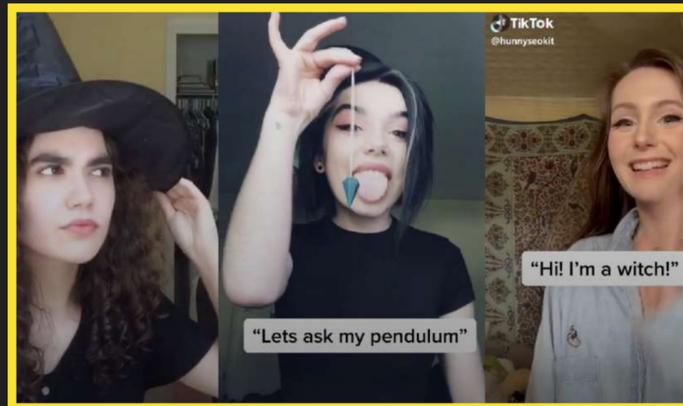
Author, Spiritual Writer Wellness Educator
Age: 46

One To Watch:

Best-selling author and Founder of Vibrate Higher Daily, a vibrational based-living online community and mentoring programme, Lalah is an Instagram star and self-help pioneer who helps her fans tap into your inner power.

CASE STUDIES

WITCHTOK



TikTok has fast become home of modern witchcraft. Taking cues from traditional witchcraft, alternative wellness has fast become one of the most popular self-care trends online, with more people turning to mystical healing practices for answers in an uncertain world. WitchTok is a content trend that includes a thriving community that live-streams tarot readings, spell tutorials, and posts engaging, educational videos on crystals, candles, plants and their take on the study of 'magick'.

UNIQLO IQ



Uniqlo IQ, a digital shopping assistant that uses Google Assistant and machine learning to recommend products based on a person's daily horoscope, as well as other data points. Shoppers can get recommendations for outfits based on their horoscope and voice or text chat with the app itself to get more information. Using Google Technology, this mobile assistant is a new way for users to find inspiration.

DIESEL X YEAR OF THE RAT



To celebrate the Chinese New Year, Diesel launched an edgy, skate-inspired capsule collection inspired by the year of the rat. Alongside a few other brands, the brand created a men and women's collection that included Jogging Jeans and T-shirts with hand-drawn illustrations of a rat riding a skateboard in black, white and red to reflect midnight, a time closely associated with the urban rodents.

#5 Audio Social Platforms

OUR PERSPECTIVE

Since the pandemic, there has been a boom in the social media audio experience particularly podcasts, Spotify and the phenomenal rise of new app Clubhouse. After a year of mass isolation and screen fatigue, audio mediums don't require scrolling and provide escapism, information and entertainment that can be accessed anywhere and with ease, seamlessly integrating content into daily life. Audio social platforms such as Clubhouse and Twitter Spaces are succeeding in providing "unfiltered" and spontaneous content and conversations that respond well to the desires of today's consumer who can be disenchanted with the lack of transparency from brands and governments.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS

There is an opportunity for brands to leverage unfiltered audio platforms such as Clubhouse and Twitter spaces as another way to foster a deeper sense of community. Hosting live chats is a way to be able to connect with your audience on a more intimate level and learn more about them, as well as co-create with advocates of the brand. The Clubhouse app has grown to champion those of diverse backgrounds which has changed the experience dramatically. Originally an app exclusively for Silicon Valley, Aniyia Williams, founder of Black and Brown Founders, has led the charge in building a large black community on the app. As the number of rooms grew and creativity within those rooms grew, this evolved into spaces that fostered conversations beyond business and tech. The Black user base has allowed for a burst of innovation in the app, exemplifying the importance of the role Black people often play as culture makers and trend setters. There is an opportunity for brands to be part of these conversations and cultural moments in time with more nimbleness and urgency in comparison to other platforms.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR INFLUENCE

Since we are seeing audiences become increasingly loyal to individual creators versus specific platforms, so consumers are now paying their creators directly through services like Patreon and Ko-fi. The future of entertainment is complex, especially after a year when many creators have stood in to provide entertaining content for audiences when traditional mediums couldn't. TechFirst reported that creators have been moving off traditional legacy social media platforms in favour of apps like Clubhouse since there is an opportunity to monetise their audience better. Through their new creator first acceleration programme, Clubhouse is funding emerging creators with equipment, concept and creative help, guests and talent sourcing, as well as promotion on and off platform. Currently, Clubhouse is invite only, but as the app expands there will be more access for and to creators, and anyone can find fame - there's a low barrier to entry since it doesn't require high production value to succeed.

3M+

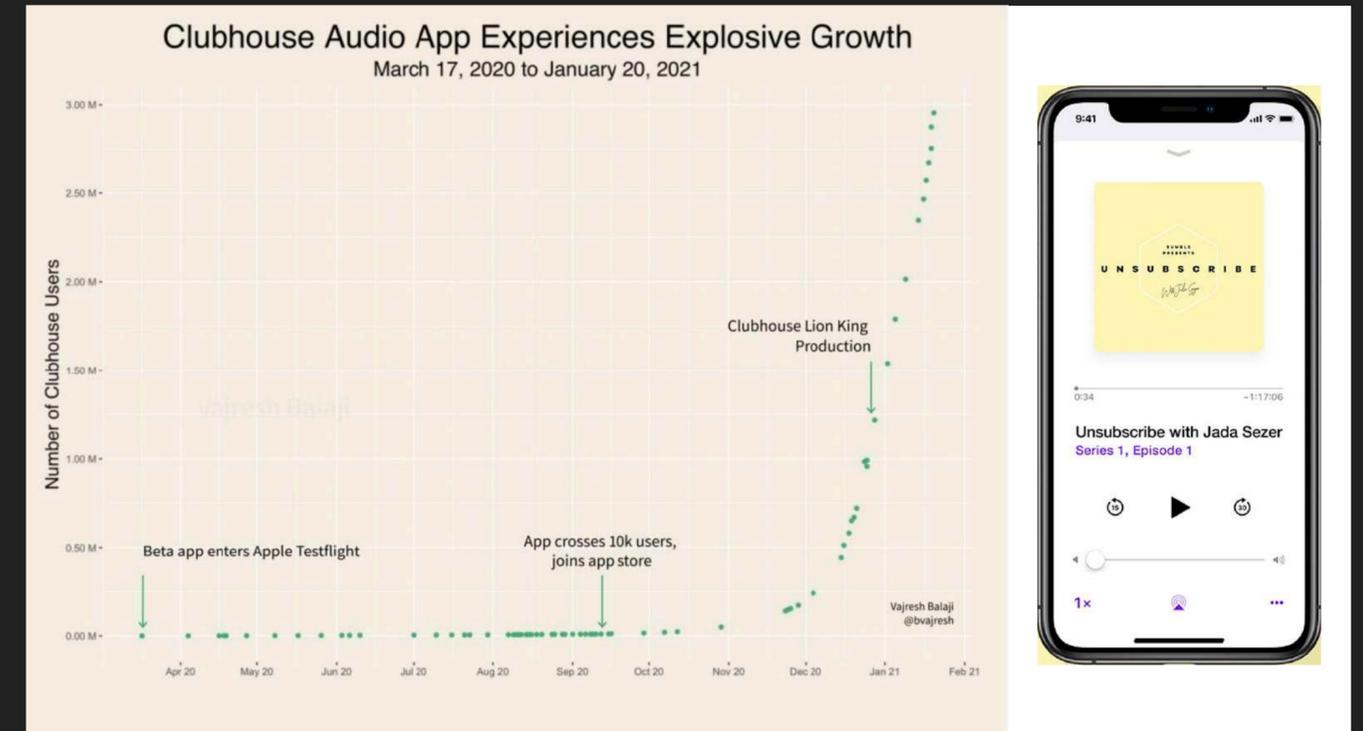
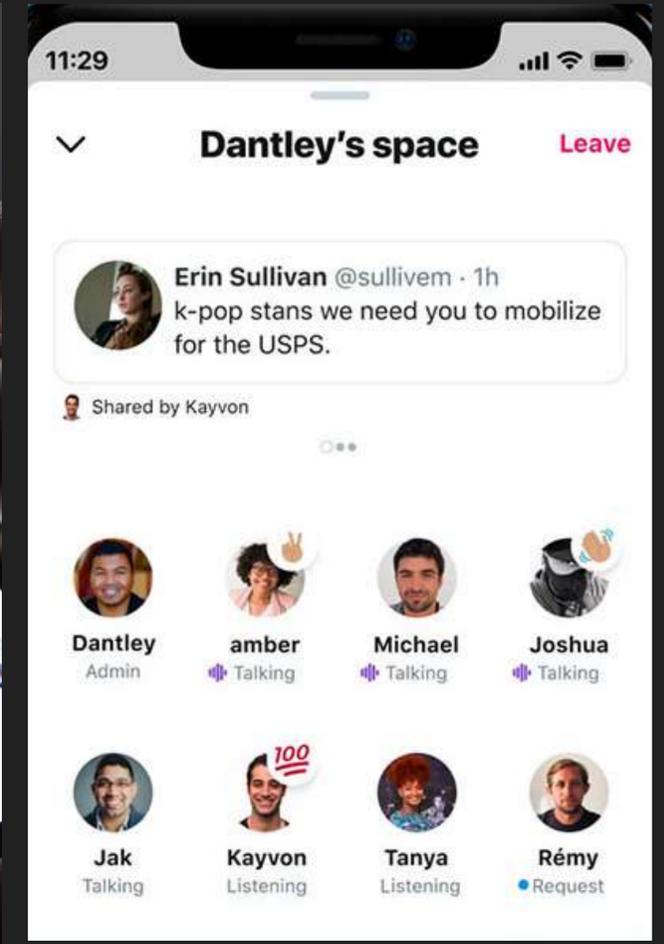
Clubhouse Audio App Experiences in January 2021 (Graph Image below right)

45%

Of adults in the US think the radio is a very trustworthy type of advertising (Inside Intelligence, 2021)

30%

Of adults in the US think podcasts are a very trustworthy type of advertising (Inside Intelligence, 2021)



INFLUENCERS TO WATCH



Nicole Ocran

@nicoleocran

Blogger + Writer

Age: 31

One To Watch:

Nicole is the co-host of the podcast 'Mixed Up' and a co-founder of the influencer industries first-ever union, 'The Creators Union' who has a passion for intersectional feminism, politics, Black women and pop and celebrity culture



Jeff Carvalho

@jeffcarvalho

Co-Founder of High Snobiety

Age: 46

One To Watch:

Co-Founder of High Snobiety and 'Culture Club' on Clubhouse. The Culture Club has over 23,000 follows and focuses on fashion as well as other topics such as art and film. Jeff's work work helps brand speak and connect through storytelling, strategy, and product development.



Demi Levato

@ddlvalo

Singer and Actress

Age: 28

One To Watch:

Singer Demi Lovato engages with her fanbase on Clubhouse announcing her new album, 'Dancing With the Devil... The Art of Starting Over', telling her story of her struggles with addiction after suffering from an overdose and telling her fans to learn how to be human, how to accept our mistakes and take ownership for them.



Shon Faye

@shon.faye

Writer, Artist and Comedian

Age: 33

One To Watch:

Dazed's LGBTQ+ editor-at-large who has become a vital voice for the trans community and appeared in the UN campaign to end violence against women. She has a podcast called 'Call Me Mother', discussing what it means to be queer in the world today.

#6 Nostalgic + Meme Content

OUR PERSPECTIVE

As global lockdowns start to ease, brands can look to alleviate the struggles and anxiety of the last year by reminding their communities of how precious a world full of freedom is. Utilising nostalgia connects consumers with positive moments of the past but also helps to envision the idea of an optimistic future. Memes provide the light relief and comedic entertainment we all need – especially amongst the endless scroll on social media. According to [GlobalWebIndex](#), nostalgia can make humans more optimistic and have a positive influence on their actions.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS

One of the current social media trends we are seeing is that brands are relaunching content and products from the past that consumers have a bond with and fond memories of. Since we are still in the midst of a period of uncertainty – and with a potential economic downturn looming – bonding moments such as these will be important for consumers who will be looking to remember happier times as a distraction from current circumstances. Content that revolves around classic elements, re-releases of now defunct products, content presented in more “old school” ways and comedic content will garner good engagement and positive sentiment from consumers. Brands should however, temper the comedic aspect of nostalgia with empathy – ensuring messaging is focussed on real and relatable moments and encouraging fans to share their real selves.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR INFLUENCE

Brands can harness sentimentality through aligning themselves with individuals’ personal experiences for a more intimate and conversational approach that is relatable. Individuals and brands who share real and relatable stories and focus messaging around human rather than product centric narratives will in exchange provide emotional escapism and convert followers into true fans. Meme content and TikTok trends showcase the appetite for more unfiltered, everyday content that reflects genuine lived experiences away from the glitz and glamour. Influencers who lean in to this and expose the realities of their life – warts and all – will see greater engagement and long-term loyalty from their followers.

8 in 10

Say that they experience feelings of nostalgia at least occasionally (GlobalWebIndex, 2019)

#1

Music is the biggest nostalgia triggers with music topping the charts for all age groups in the last year (Business Wire, 2019)

39%

Of US and UK internet users said they shared memes on TikTok (Portada Online, (2021)

There's just not enough time in the day
screen time 11 hours and 36 minutes



In a beer garden at 00:01 on 12th April contemplating the last year like...



Unfun fun facts



Content that UK and US Social Media Users Are Sharing More of on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, May 2020

% of respondents

	TikTok	Instagram	Facebook
Funny videos	48%	42%	36%
Personal news/updates	47%	43%	40%
Memes	39%	34%	29%
News stories related to the coronavirus pandemic	28%	26%	25%
Influencer social media posts	24%	16%	13%
A brand's social media posts	21%	14%	11%
News stories not related to the coronavirus pandemic	21%	21%	19%
Brand/product recommendations	21%	15%	12%

Note: ages 16-64 who use each platform; TikTok (n=291); Instagram (n=1,208); Facebook (n=2,112)
Source: GlobalWebIndex, "Social Flagship Report 2020," Aug 11, 2020

RE

INFLUENCERS TO WATCH



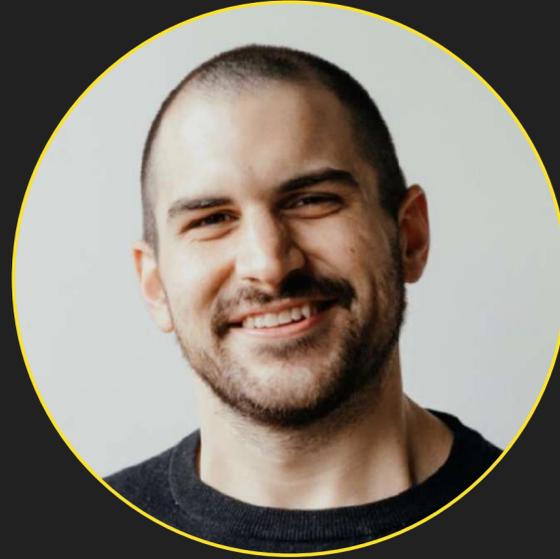
Fat Tony
 @dj_fattonoy_
 Meme Account
 Age: n/a

One To Watch:
 DJ Fat Tony, became known during the pandemic as the king of memes during the pandemic. Friends with Kate Moss and Donatella Versace, he has flown around the world playing at fashion week after-parties and on private island and his memes are the ultimate mood lifters.



HunsNet
 @hunsnet
 Meme Account
 Age: n/a

One To Watch:
 Hunsnet is a comedy meme account with a British sense of humour that focuses on hun culture and the 'hunniest huns'. The account has created a really strong sense of community and has now become a pop culture reference



Rod
 @justme.rod
 TikToker
 Age: n/a

One To Watch:
 Rod has gone viral on TikTok for his videos targeted to stressed millennials to showcase that they're not the only ones having a hard time or feeling overwhelmed about life struggles. He sees himself as a "coworker" to his followers.



Bella Younger
 @deliciouslystella
 Writer
 Age: n/a

One To Watch:
 Originally a writer and brand consultant, Bella has risen the ranks for her parodies of wellness influencers and recently published a comedic book called 'Under the Influence'. Twice named as one of the Evening Standard's most influential Londoners and previously written for respected publications.



Corporate Natalie
 @corporatenatalie
 Meme Account
 Age: n/a

One To Watch:
 Natalie's Tiktok and Instagram account posts daily impressions of working from home shenanigans and the cast of characters you most likely call colleagues, from "The Name Dropper" to "The Coworker Who's Obsessed With Circling Back."s

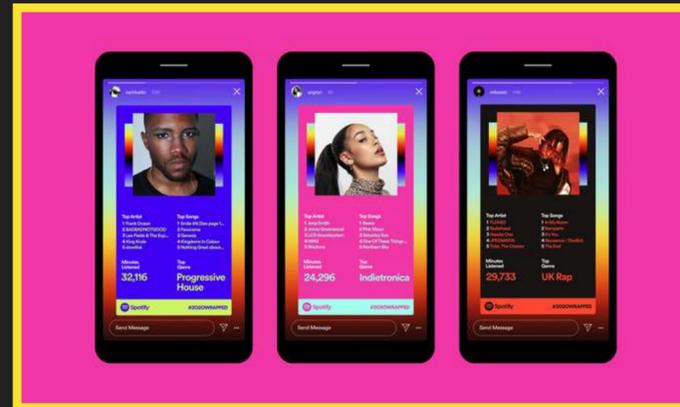
CASE STUDIES

FRED AGAIN X WE LOST DANCING



Electronic artist Fred Again launched a social media campaign to promote his new song euphoric and nostalgic song "We Lost Dancing" that is about an emotional return to the dance-floor catalysing a movement around his new song about the memory of dancing as a reminder of the unprecedented times we lived through losing a year of dancing in our lives. Fred Again asked his fans to share videos of their favourite dancing memories playing the song over the video and in return Fred Again promised to reshare the videos on his stories causing the campaign to go viral and spread awareness for his song.

SPOTIFY WRAPPED



This feature allows users to recount their 50 most-listened-to songs, their most-listened-to artists, and even their favourite genre that captured their year. Spotify also introduced a Time Capsule feature that caused Spotify's mobile app downloads increased by 21 per cent in the first week of December proving that the megatrend of nostalgia can have a huge impact.

UGG #FEELLOVE



For an unconventional Christmas, UGG asked influencers to partner with them to #feellove and spread love for the holiday season by treating themselves and a loved one to some cozy UGG footwear to make the holidays feel special during a year when people are away from their loved ones.

KEY LEARNINGS

#1 Lead with purpose and put people, not product at the centre of your strategies.

#2 Look to engage broader audiences by activating within new categories of culture

#3 Be audience-first, understanding the different interest areas and passion points that various communities have and adapt your approach accordingly

#4 Engage in authentic and transparent conversations with your audience – remove the filters and get real



Spotlight On: LGBTQI+ Month

Whilst the last 12 months have no doubt provided many unexpected challenges globally, there has also been a continued focus on the importance of challenging conversations across many parts of society with a profound feeling of hope and optimism for change. This has spurred incredible opportunities for growth with a new understanding of the work that needs to be done to create real and lasting change. Conversations around diversity and inclusion are being discussed from board level all the way down with the responsibility for agencies and brands to continue this learning increasing, because consumers now more than ever want to see tangible efforts from the industry.





Whilst the industry continues to increase representation for LGBTQI+ community there are still challenges.

The term inclusivity can often feel like a buzzword brands use to safeguard themselves from critique without the commitment to showcasing their efforts.

True inclusivity is about more than casting the face for the campaign and for Kenny means 'being involved in the whole conversation. 'Bring me into the initial creative process, let me share my experience and knowledge and not just be brought in last minute'. Adding that influencers who are often used simply for their face also have extensive knowledge to offer. If brands can learn to work in collaboration with LGBTQI+ influences from the get go, the benefits go beyond engagement rates and likes but offer palpable learnings, educating the process internally and showing the audiences the commitment to this learning.

There needs to be an understanding in the role of intersectionality.

Efforts to increase D&I representation can at times seem like tick box exercises that fall short of acknowledging the nuances of society. Often influencers can find themselves being pushed into binaries of representation that restrict their range of opportunities. For Char as a Queer Black woman it can be frustrating to be brought into campaigns with a polarised perspective. As an industry we need to ensure that there is an understanding of the multi-layered experiences of the people we aim to represent. By attempting to increase D&I efforts for LGBTQI+ voices, but failing to acknowledge the diversity of this community we risk losing opportunities for development, learning and real change.

Invite influencers to be part of the creative ideation process.

Combining their knowledge of executing campaigns paired with a deeply personal understanding of their audiences Char and Kenny agree that there's more they can offer than just their platform. Expressing a desire to not only be represented as the 'face' for the LGBTQI+ community but as someone who can support ideation, creative execution and work behind the scenes with the brand to build knowledge and produce an incredibly strong and diverse product and campaign.

If the industry wants to create campaigns that facilitate change, optimise the diversity of their casting and increase representation for marginalised communities, it has to start thinking smarter. Hire diverse talent to do more than front the brand. If a room full of heteronormative people are creating a campaign for the LGBTQI+ community, we have to ask ourselves, are we the best people for this job? The answer is likely a no.

Whilst we ask the LGBTQI+ community to share their emotional labour, we need to make space for their joy.

Whilst sharing their personal experiences provides ways for Kenny and Char to educate their audiences, it's not the only way. Highlighting the importance to be offered the space to talk about their positive experiences also. For Kenny this is something that during Pride month feels respected 'I feel like Pride is just about joy, no one can be asked to talk about their trauma during that month'. Looking forward as we continue to learn as an industry we should see a shift to a consistent Pride mentality – more joy. To do the work each month respecting the struggles the community has faced, without asking them to carry it along for each campaign.

APPENDIX

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