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# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

## 2021

THE  
GLOBAL  
INDIE  
INSIGHTS

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THE SOCIAL MEDIA AGENCY



thenetworkone

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# FOREWORD

*We've seen a renewed appreciation for social media this year, especially as a bridge to have genuine conversations with consumers, but also because it's multifaceted by nature. It's a focus group, an advertising platform, a place to test and learn, to share ideas, to hear ideas, to respond to questions, to influence purchasing decisions and now it can be your shop front as well.*

**-Friday O'Flaherty, Osaka Labs**

This truly has been a good year for social. The usage rates are up, CPMs are down, and new channels make sure we all stay glued to our screens. If there has been one safe haven for marketers in the midst of all the budget cuts, it has been social media. WARC data shows that post-outbreak the investments in social have risen 9,8%, faring the best out of all the media mix elements analyzed.

The triumph hasn't happened over night, of course. It was there all along, way before the global pandemic. Brands across all industries have embraced social throughout the 2010s. Our own data shows how the share of Cannes Lions winners with social media at the core of the campaign has risen from 20% in 2012 all the way to 89% in 2019.

Along with these changes have come the multifaceted changes of the social media itself. One day it's all timeline, and then all of a sudden, stories. Snap here, selfie there, tik tok, stop the clock. It's not a job for one marketer, to stay on top of it all. Constantly.

Which brings us to our report.

It isn't too often that you couldn't use a bit of valuable advice. Nor is it too often

you'd get it from the brightest minds at the leading independent agencies in the world. All over the world. As we all know, social is local, and thus getting those bits of advice from a dozen different locations is ever more valuable.

We'd like to thank each of our experts for sharing their thoughts – during the most hectic time of the year, to boot. Hopefully you, the reader, will find them as insightful and useful as we did whilst putting this whitepaper together.

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## **thenetworkone**

The world's leading independent agencies network. With over 1,200 agencies in 115 countries, thenetworkone is uniquely suited to find you the right agency partner in whichever market you need. Our best-in-class agencies can provide advertising, PR, media, digital, events, branding and design, B2B and B2C solutions, plus anything else you might require.

## **Kurio // The Social Media Age(ncy)**

We are a social-first creative agency based in Helsinki, Finland. We deliver results whether it is bigger profits, increased sales, reduced media budgets or globally acknowledged campaigns that move people with insight and creativity. We believe social media has changed the way marketing works – for good. Proud to be part of thenetworkone and named as the Agency Of The Year 2020 in European Excellence Awards, SABRE Awards EMEA and Finnish Comms Awards.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*We interviewed leading independent agencies around the world and identified seven major trends for social media marketing in 2021. All of them are explored in more detail on the upcoming pages.*

- 1. Shoppable social becomes unstoppable.** Social commerce has picked up speed in 2020 thanks to lockdowns and will continue on the same trajectory. Everyone from brick-n-mortar stores to global giants can benefit from the shoppable features and ecommerce integrations. Get your product catalog ready!
- 2. TikTok keeps reeling in.** The channel has lured in people from all age groups around the world during the pandemic. And shows no sign of stopping. Better get used to – and make the most of it.
- 3. Teeming with live streaming.** One more trend we have covid-19 to thank for: live-streaming. With people stuck indoors and to their devices, the numbers of livestreams have boomed on channels ranging from Instagram to TikTok and from LinkedIn to Taobao Live. It's become a norm.
- 4. Authenticity yields influence.** We've seen the trend: people are shifting attention from the biggest influencers to the micro ones, even the nano. To people like themselves. And there are more and more of those influencers – brands just need to find and surface them.
- 5. Influencer collabs go long-term.** Everyone wins: consumers get the authenticity they want, influencers get security and stability, and brands get more bang for the buck over time. This is only rational – as more money goes into influencer marketing, more scrutiny on ROI is expected.
- 6. Influencers to influence strategies.** It is time to expand influencer deals not only in length but also in depth. It has become clear that the best way to use influencers is not as a media placement, but rather as part of the idea. Getting them onboard in the planning helps.
- 7. Post-purpose will be social-first.** Call it what you like, but one thing is clear: people expect brands to take a stand and make a change for better world. And if there is one media where it is most evident, it is the real-time, two-ways, transparent social media. Actions over words!

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METHODOLOGY

*The insights were gathered by interviewing 16 social media marketing experts from 16 award-winning independent agencies. The respondents are all part of the world's leading independent network, thenetworkone, hailing from countries as diverse as China, USA, Germany, UK, Sudan, South Africa, Singapore, and Romania. The interviews were done in December 2020.*

*All the respondents are using social media to help their clients do better communications, marketing, and eventually, business. They don't work with any particular social media platform or service-provider, thus their insights come from an objective point-of-view. Coming from not only different countries, but also different types of agencies, their answers offer a 360 view of social media marketing for the upcoming year.*

# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## 1. SHOPPABLE SOCIAL BECOMES UNSTOPPABLE

“One thing that we’ve also seen grow immensely in 2020 is social commerce. WARC has reported that social commerce orders in the first half of 2020 have doubled compared to the same time last year. Product availability in e-commerce and social media sites is now an expectation from consumers especially with the increased popularity of live commerce.”

**Kei Obusan, Head of Insights & Innovation, Circus Social**

“Shoppable social media is one of the exciting growth trends for 2021. – Livestreaming eCommerce has been extremely popular in China for a while. The market reached \$4.4 billion in 2018 and continues to grow at pace.”

**Friday O’Flaherty, Managing Partner, Osaka Labs**

“Covid-19 has acted as a catalyst for live streaming ecommerce with it now being crucial for brands to stay relevant and drive sales. We’ve had clients that generate half of their annual sales in one day thanks to live streaming! Looking ahead to 2021, live streaming ecommerce will continue to play a key component in brands’ marketing strategies in China – and, I predict, in the West too.”

**James Hebbert, Managing Director, Hylink UK**

***China leads the way in social shopping. There are now 713MM social commerce users, and the industry has grown 66% in the past year. (Source: Statista 2020)\****

\* Read more: <https://www.statista.com/topics/6718/social-commerce-in-china/>

# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## 2. TIKTOK KEEPS REELING IN

“Perhaps the biggest trend I’d describe as the “TikTokification of social” which is a shift from very polished content to a much looser, more playful, very human approach. This is an aesthetic change that goes beyond TikTok but I think its rise (and Stories as a format) has given social a different flavour.”

**Danny Pinch, Executive Creative Director, King James Group**

“So long Tiger King, hello TikTok. With television and film production largely on hold thanks to COVID and the future of cinema unclear, streaming platforms and TV will be short on finished content in 2021. But users won’t be

short on boredom and are desperate to fill the hours stuck inside. They’ll turn to TikTok and YouTube for their video content, and creators can fill that void. The silver screen may dim in 2021, but the one in our hands glows ever brighter.”

**Babs Watson, Director of Brand and Content & Erin Dodds, Senior Account Manager, Launch**

“Recent data revealed that TikTok was the most downloaded app in 2020 – it’s clear that this platform needs to be a key focus of social marketing efforts, and not just for younger audiences.”

**Josh Hood, Social Media Strategist & Simon Walton, Social Brand Lead, Above+Beyond**

**Globally 44% of CMOs will invest more spend on TikTok in 2021. Still, 39% of CMOs have not yet spent a dime. Only 5% are planning to cut their investments in the channel. (Source: WARC 2020)\***

\* Read more: <https://lp.warc.com/marketers-toolkit-2021-download.html>

# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## 3. TEEMING WITH LIVE STREAMING

“2020 also made us realize that livestreams in social media are not designed exclusively for news stations and gamers. They are excellent for situations when we wish to present the reality – especially during isolation. Brands, as well as users of all kinds of social media, have got used to this tool and will reach for it more willingly in the future.”

**Dawid Kaźmierczak, Social & PR Director,  
180heartbeats + JUNG v MATT**

“Live video has been amplified by the pandemic context and adopted to a greater extent by both brands and content creators. Its main advantage is that it creates an immediate and intimate connection with the audience. – Since we all

had to get used to video calls for work, school, meetings with friends and other hobbies, we feel more comfortable watching less processed videos and more personal ones. This is also a blessing for marketers, because it offers the opportunity to create engaging content with minimal production budgets and efforts.”

**Oana Oprea, Digital Creative Planner, Jazz  
Communication**

“I think we have to include live streams and virtual events as a trend that will stick with us. The thought of going on another Zoom event or tuning into a live-streamed exercise class fills me with dread but when the dust settles I think this is a behavior that will stay with us. It makes a lot of sense to tune into a conference or event you can’t make it to and I think we have learned a lot about how to host live online experiences.”

**Danny Pinch, Executive Creative Director,  
King James Group**

**34% of all internet users are gaming or social live streamers. The biggest share of live streaming internet users are found in the APAC and MEA.  
(Source: GlobalWebIndex 2020)\***

\* Read more <https://www.globalwebindex.com/reports/live-streaming>

# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## 4. AUTHENTICITY YIELDS INFLUENCE

“Influencers have [also] been much more vocal about truly supporting and using products and not just simply endorsing products just for cloud or pay. More so than not, I predict even more shifts away from celebrity to micro influencers for planned partnerships as consumers are craving authenticity and transparency. Many celebrities have started to independently speak about products without prompt to try to garner these connections.”

**Theresa Myrill, Vice President,  
Social Media, Barkley**

“In China in 2021 we’ll likely see that influencer marketing will shift away from traditional influencers (called KOLs - Key Opinion Leaders) and move towards KOCs (Key Opinion Consumers). When Chinese consumers turn to digital for advice on purchase decisions they look for trusted experts above all else. Brands no longer need to pay for expensive celebrity endorsements to promote their products and increasingly we’ll see brands train their own consultants to share knowledge online.”

**James Hebbert, Managing Director,  
Hylink UK**

“With all the changes it brought us, 2020 has also done something positive and proved that we do not really need influencers. Is there any value that these animated billboards bring to our lives (other than product placement and holiday snapshots)? We all had to get shut in our homes to realize that. But the world can’t stand emptiness, so then our feeds were visited by @420dogface208 riding a skateboard, listening to Dreams by Fleetwood Mac, and sipping some cranberry juice. And thus, the world changed for the better.”

**Dawid Kaźmierczak, Social & PR Director,  
180heartbeats + JUNG v MATT**

**25% of all consumers (in USA, UK and Germany) are more likely to source news updates and opinions from influencers than journalists and established news outlets.**

**(Source: Takumi 2020)**

Read more: <https://takumi.com/whitepaper2020>

# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## 5. INFLUENCER COLLABS GO LONG-TERM

“We believe the days of Influencer marketing as a “one-off” strategy are over. In 2021, influencers will increasingly be contracted on a recurring basis to boost brand loyalty and attention. Rather than switching on/off influencers for different campaigns, brands will work with influencers to continue to build their reputation because of their authenticity and ability to build trusting relationships with their follower’s long term.”

**Kevin Fernandez, Social Media Manager, Adolescent**

“We’re seeing more long-term relationships between brands and influencers. Often with rocky starts, that smoothen out as they get to know each other. What would help is more detailed influencer contracts. These would protect both the brand and influencer. Setting expectations for results based on the data both parties are already seeing.”

**Joshua Tabansi, Creative Director, EnterFive & Product Director, Versus LLC**

”The client and the influencer working together to create long term value and build a ‘line of sight’ between the client’s influencer spend and new revenue entering the client’s business. This is the future of Influencer marketing in 2021. There’ll always be a market for single post, quick and dirty shout outs, but real influencer marketing will evolve to be value driven and long term.”

**Aziz Musa, CEO, Sudan Digital & Chairman, AMC Group**

***How easy is it for a marketer to find the right influencer(s)? 23% say that it is very difficult, and 62% suggest it is semi difficult. A mere 14% of marketing professionals reported finding appropriate influencers to be easy. (Source: Influencer Marketing Hub 2020)\****

\* Read more: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report-2020/>

# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## 6. INFLUENCERS TO INFLUENCE STRATEGIES

“Everyone knows that tapping the right voices is a powerful way for a brand to earn credibility. But in 2021, we’ll see more brands finding ways to bring in influencers earlier on in the process as strategists. Creators won’t just be responding to briefs for brands, but helping to shape them too – and that’s the power of true influence. Expect to see brands forming influencer collectives and creators shaping brand strategies.”

**Victoria Gates-Fleming, Senior Director,  
Digital Strategy, Day One Agency**

“Briefs to influencers will be much more complex and will require real creative input, clear storytelling and more diverse formats. It is no longer enough for the influencer to present the product, but they will have to integrate it into a story or a concept that is either inspirational or entertaining – all the while it is essential to be authentic and well presented in relation to the influencer’s lifestyle. The work process will also be a co-creation, in which marketers can come up with very clear requirements, addressed to as creative, not as to a transmitter.”

**Oana Oprea, Digital Creative Planner, Jazz  
Communication**

“We always advise clients against putting out bulk briefs to influencers asking to get them to feature a product or brand. At times it feels like influencer marketing is just the reinvention of the shopping channel and just feels like it does nothing for the brands involved. – If possible, we only work with influencers (or maybe “creators” is a better term) when there is an idea that we think they’re right for. If we think their take on a subject helps or their creative approach could add something to the idea, then we work with them. When you have the right idea and the right influencer then you can make some magic happen.”

**Danny Pinch, Executive Creative Director,  
King James Group**

**Globally 45% of CMOs plan invest more on influencer marketing in 2021, while 28% will keep the spend same and 13% will decrease it. (Source: WARC 2020)\***

\* Read more: <https://lp.warc.com/marketers-toolkit-2021-download.html>

# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## 7. POST-PURPOSE WILL BE SOCIAL-FIRST

“2020 has seen a great worldwide change in the use of social media. People, as before, use it in order to find news, keep in touch and pass the time. But from this year on, brands have an increasing responsibility on what they communicate and how they work for their clients and the community. The social impact on marketing actions is more relevant than ever and brands should approach this theme with study and precaution, supporting causes and taking sides.”

**Michele Polico, Chief Innovation Officer,  
Different**

“Brands have continued to understand the importance of transparency. In a time where many consumers feel consumed with the ever-changing outside environment, brands have been a lifeline by providing informative and authentic content more so than ever. In essence, consumers no longer have time for BS. They are looking for purpose from everything that they consume. This includes transparency about the way products are made, the individuals that work for the brand, and how the brand as a whole is investing in larger societal and economic initiatives beyond just their products.”

**Theresa Myrill, Vice President, Social Media,  
Barkley**

“In 2021, as well as in the future, those brands that will be interested in creating a real and engaged community on social media, will never be “see-through”, and their ambition will never be to only make you smile. These brands will speak about things that matter and induce their followers to take actions that go beyond buying their product or service. They will have more character and personality, thanks to which they will no longer be “removed” from reality. Together with the consumers they will create a new reality and participate actively in social and cultural changes. This, in turn, will work towards creating a well-defined, distinct fanbase.”

**Dawid Kaźmierczak, Social & PR Director,  
180heartbeats + JUNG v MATT**

**About 60% of millennials and gen Z say they plan to buy more products and services from large businesses that have taken care of their workforces and positively affected society during the pandemic. (Source: Deloitte 2020)\***

\* Read more: <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennialsurvey.html>

# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## CAMPAIGNS VS. ALWAYS-ON

"We're constantly consuming content, from the minute we first check our phones to the last scroll at night and it's harder than ever to really stand out as a brand in our feeds. Especially during these uncertain times, agile campaigns that are truly connected to a cultural insight are much more likely to break through with a target audience, increase share of voice and drive brand action."

**Victoria Gates-Fleming, Senior Director, Digital Strategy, Day One Agency**

"I'd say this depends on the type of business, product and season, but generally campaigns are a best practice to increase awareness and hype in a short period, and building a "moment". Always-on activities, on the other hand, are crucial to capitalize the seeds that have been planted with campaigns. Think of it as a space rocket: you need full-throttle to break through the atmosphere, then you can switch off the engines and enjoy the ride."

**Michele Polico, Chief Innovation Officer, Different**

"In China a combination of both always-on and campaigns is imperative. Chinese millennial consumers demand regular quality content and, from a cultural perspective, campaigns for shopping festivals throughout the year are significant as a main driver of sales."

**James Hebbert, Managing Director, Hylink UK**

"Would you date someone who takes you on a fabulous night out then ghosts you, only to reappear months later like a zombie begging for your attention? Block and delete. Playing hard to get has its place, but it's steady and reliable romance we're after for a long-term love affair." **Babs Watson, Director of Brand and Content & Erin Dodds, Senior Account Manager, Launch**

"Without a strong always-on, your campaigns fall flat. They need a higher media investment and they won't be remembered if you as a brand don't communicate consistently at a high level. A good always-on also creates virals, which strengthen a brand just as much as large campaigns."

**Felix Willikonsky, Executive Director, Digital Strategy, PIABO**

"Always-on is more important to us because it provides us more opportunities to measure meaningful KPI's throughout the year."

**Kevin Fernandez, Social Media Manager, Adolescent**



# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## PAID VS. ORGANIC

"The reality is that over the years and particularly in 2020, organic growth is becoming as mythical as the Methuselah sword. That doesn't mean that all focus goes into Paid, not at all. It just means we have to search for value where ever we can and continue to try to deliver content and value that drives organic engagement, whilst being willing to give our content paid pushes when needed."

**Aziz Musa, CEO, Sudan Digital & Chairman, AMC Group**

"Show me the money, honey. Organic can only get you so far, and although they won't admit to it, the platforms will reward your organic posts in the algorithm if you're willing to shell out a little cash for their advertising."

**Babs Watson, Director of Brand and Content & Erin Dodds, Senior Account Manager, Launch**

"Paid and organic relate to different goals. You simply won't reach either new people nor your fans without paid media, but once you have caught them, and they're interested in your story, you need deep and quality content to let them discover every side of the brand and product, from values to features. So I wouldn't say we "focus" more on either, they serve different purposes on a customer journey."

**Michele Polico, Chief Innovation Officer, Different**

"Organic storytelling is the best indicator of whether something is working or not and whether you are communicating correctly. Strong brands are built on communities and hitting the right tone. I still hear from smart people that organic reach is dead and that success must always be demonstrable. However, my gut feeling is still more important to me than a spreadsheet."

**Felix Willikonsky, Executive Director, Digital Strategy, PIABO**

"Organic is the way to go. Paid helps to get an initial push. But, if you're making too many assumptions about what your audience wants to see, you risk wasting money. Organic growth allows you to learn and refine as you go."

**Joshua Tabansi, Creative Director, EnterFive & Product Director, Versus LLC**

"The big question for me is not paid verse organic but whether you can separate content from the media. Should both be done inhouse or externally, two agencies or one? It's important for the content and media to run in harmony, to be very specific to each platform, for all activity to be connected and to remain agile - optimizing content and media together in real-time. On most platforms you will need paid media to achieve sufficient reach, but you also need content that's interesting to your audience."

**Friday O'Flaherty, Managing Partner, Osaka Labs**



# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2021

## CONTENT-FIRST VS. CHANNEL-FIRST

"When developing our social media plans we believe that content comes first because the ideas are the goldmine and the channels are merely tools we use to distribute our content."

**Kevin Fernandez, Social Media Manager, Adolescent**

"We believe that the idea should lead. If after internal debate the team thinks it will deliver on the marketing goal then the distribution conversation begins. This could result in a single channel communications plan or something cross-platform. It all depends how flexible the concept is and how that connects to the audience behaviours wherever they are."

**Sean Bell, Head of Digital, Zulu Alpha Kilo**

"We found thinking about channels first can lead to creatives focusing too much on the execution. Focusing first on content means we can then work back to find the right channel for the idea and maximise its potential to engage audiences."

**Josh Hood, Social Media Strategist & Simon Walton, Social Brand Lead, Above+Beyond**

"Each social channel has a creative language of its own. If you don't understand what channel you're working in it's like writing an ad that you don't know which country it's running in."

**Danny Pinch, Executive Creative Director, King James Group**

"This isn't complicated, all social content is derived from an objective, that objective is derived from a client need, the client need is targeted at a certain persona and that person exists on specific channels. So when we know who we are targeting, we know where they exist."

**Aziz Musa, CEO, Sudan Digital & Chairman, AMC Group**

"Great content should thrive on any channel, right? But then along came TikTok to remind us all channels are not created equal."

**Babs Watson, Director of Brand and Content & Erin Dodds, Senior Account Manager, Launch**

CONTENT  
FIRST



CHANNEL  
FIRST

INTERVIEWS  
**INTERVIEWS**  
INTERVIEWS  
INTERVIEWS  
INTERVIEWS  
INTERVIEWS  
INTERVIEWS

*There's a whole lot to learn from each and every point made by each and every expert. That is why we printed their answers here in their entirety.*

*And added their Twitter handles for you to start a discussion.*

# 180HEARTBEATS + JUNG v MATT



**Dawid Kaźmierczak,  
Social & PR Director,  
180heartbeats +  
JUNG v MATT**

180HEARTBEATS + JUNG v MATT (POLAND)  
180heartbeats + JUNG v MATT is an independent interactive agency, established in Warsaw in 2007. Creativity, independence, and faith in the power of innovation are amongst the greatest values, driving the agency. Our mission is: creating brand excitement and partnering with brands that want to make a change.

“I am positive that in 2021 we will witness a number of TikTok campaigns that completely embrace the makers’ creativity together with the platform’s possibilities.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## *What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?*

Many big brands have used their social media channels to speak to literally everyone. Their communication was often aimed at being liked by all, avoiding polarizing topics, and steering clear of addressing the current social situation. But 2020 forced a change on this state of affairs. Of course, some brands have stopped their social media communication. But others decided to remain active, speak to their customers and to address the difficulty

of this year instead of creating an idealized and glamorized image of reality. Many brands have skilfully navigated through the topic of the COVID-19 pandemics, supported social movements like #blacklivesmatter, or advocated for the civic duties and participation in the United States presidential election.

In 2021, as well as in the future, those brands that will be interested in creating a real and engaged community on social media, will never be “see-through”, and their ambition will never be to only make you smile. These brands will speak about things that matter and induce their followers to take actions that go beyond buying their product or service. They will have

more character and personality, thanks to which they will no longer be “removed” from reality. Together with the consumers they will create a new reality and participate actively in social and cultural changes. This, in turn, will work towards creating a well-defined, distinct fanbase.

## **What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?**

This year brought us numerous interesting stats. To name those that really are a sign of things to come, I have to list the following three statistics.

The ever-growing popularity of TikTok forced Instagram to launch its own counterpart, Instagram Reels. We have already seen it happen once, in 2016, when Instagram copied some of the mechanics we knew from Snapchat and launched Instagram Stories.

TikTok became the Ad Age Marketer of the Year and is in the process of establishing partnership with agencies all around the world. This will definitely have a positive effect on the quality of campaigns on this platform. I am positive that in 2021 we will witness a number of TikTok campaigns that completely embrace the makers' creativity together with the platform's possibilities.

2020 also made us realize that livestreams in social media are not designed exclusively for news stations and gamers. They are excellent for situations when we wish to present the reality – especially during isolation. Brands, as well as users of all kinds of social media, have got used to this tool and will reach for it more willingly in the future.

Instagram's transformation into an e-commerce platform has been going on for months. It is also a process that has fully happened in front of our eyes. It is not something that started to go on yesterday, but the last actualization that replaced notifications with the Instagram's store is a pronounced sign marking the direction in which the platform is going to grow.

## Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?

With all the changes it brought us, 2020 has also done something positive and proved that we do not really need influencers. Is there any value that these animated billboards bring to our lives (other than product placement and holiday snapshots)? We all had to get shut in our homes to realize that. But the world can't stand emptiness, so then our feeds were visited by @420doggface208 riding a skateboard, listening to Dreams by Fleetwood Mac, and sipping some cranberry juice. And thus,

the world changed for the better. It became a place where we do not glorify another butt or another yacht, but praise the authentic joy of riding a skateboard and being yourself. I really, really hope that this simpleness and authenticity will continue to characterize people with whom brands will want to work. I also hope that in the future we will move away from supporting living poster pillars with broad reach.

The other positive phenomenon is the emergence of influencers who fight fake news and use their reach to spread true and unadulterated information. This may spell the appear-

ance of a new kind of influencers, those that without partnering with big newspapers will still be able to deliver verified, opinion-forming information. But it is not a given that this will happen.

These phenomena will make marketers think about how to meticulously choose influencers. Reach will cease to be the main deciding factor. Instead, values and attitudes represented by influencers will come to the foreground, especially in cases where long-term partnerships are at stake. But this process will be visible only on the most developed markets – the rest will continue to be propelled by reach and sales generated from it.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

(In general) these days we would say always-on. Just having in mind constantly changing customer needs and trends, brands need to be visible, expressive and responsive.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

In terms of planning it should always be paid. For brands organic reach is like a reward, you can hope for it, but never fully expect it.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

In terms of planning it would be channel first. Not every channel is for everyone and not every idea is for every channel.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

From all the campaigns that went this year on air, the 'Moldy Whopper' by Burger King has been the most impressive one. Showing the "beauty of no artificial preservatives" brings the communication of this food chain (and of all the branch) to another level. It doesn't only fit in with the fierce and bold brand's vibe known all over the world but also successfully points out competitors' weak points. Hopefully, in 2021 more and more brands will share the same

approach. The campaigns created afterwards were based mostly on the fact that all the world faces quite similar social and economic problems due to the pandemic outbreak. As a result, a majority of 2020 ads were telling the same story, called "stay together and be safe in the difficult times".

# ABOVE+BEYOND



**Josh Hood,  
Social Media Strategist,  
Above+Beyond**

**Simon Walton,  
Social Brand Lead,  
Above+Beyond**

“Finding ways to make campaigns feel like always-on content too is a good way to drive audience engagement.”

ABOVE+BEYOND (UK)  
Above+Beyond is the independent creative agency for the Audience Age. We transform audiences into actively engaged customers through the power of Audience-Age creativity. We work with brilliant clients including Subway, Amazon and Walgreens Boots Alliance.

# THREE BIG ONES

## **What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?**

Sound on. Not just because of TikTok, but because so many more people are working from home, and so not concerned about scrolling through their phone in the office environment and getting caught out with the sound on.

## **What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?**

First, app usage data from App Annie demonstrated just how important taking a 'mobile first' approach on social is – data showed that people spent 1.6 trillion hours on mobile in the first half of 2020 (almost four and a half hours a day!).

Second, new insight from Twitter lifted the lid on the pulse of the nation, and revealed that tweets about parenting (+42%), friendship (>50%) and grief (+51%) were on the rise – suggesting empathy should be central to communications strategies.

Recent data revealed that TikTok was the most downloaded app in 2020 – it's clear that this platform needs to be a key focus of social marketing efforts, and not just for younger audiences.

## **Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?**

Hopefully down the route of ensuring influencers are genuine ambassadors or advocates. People want to know that influencers truly buy into the brand that they're promoting. To do this, brands should look to foster long term relationships with their influencers, and in turn, build trust with their target audiences.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

Always-on content provides the opportunity to be really authentic with audiences, and encourage two way conversations. Finding ways to make campaigns feel like always-on content too is a good way to drive audience engagement.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

With organic algorithms making it much harder for brands to reach their audiences, following a paid-first approach to our planning means that we're free to come up with big ideas in the knowledge that our media strategy will ensure we're reaching the right audience at the right times.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

We don't want to restrict creatives in their ideas for social content. We found thinking about channels first can lead to creatives focusing too much on the execution. Focusing first on content means we can then work back to find the right channel for the idea and maximise its potential to engage audiences.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

We loved ASOS's 'Ayy Sauce' campaign, which lived on TikTok. A really smart campaign that felt totally authentic to the platform and target audience. And the weird and wacky photo-shoots which models undertook while stuck at home during lockdown were another great way to spark conversation.

# ADOLESCENT



**Kevin Fernandez,  
Social Media Manager,  
Adolescent**

ADOLESCENT (USA)  
Founded in 2013, we are a global gen z studio: with advertising agency, production company, media division, digital platform and original content focused on authentically reaching the teen and youth audience with commercial and entertainment-driven content made by youth for youth.

”For brands, the time to embrace short-form video marketing is now.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## ***What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?***

Two words: Instagram Reels. With the handful of fun and fancy features rolling out for Instagram marketing, the trend is clearly moving towards video – especially short-form video.

We saw this when Stories came out in 2016. Engagement and reach for feed posts dropped as Instagram shifted its attention to

its users of Instagram Stories. Now in 2020, we're seeing the same thing happen; reach is dropping for Stories and feed posts, while engagement for Reels are soaring.

For brands, the time to embrace short-form video marketing is now. Instagram Reels can be 15 or 30 seconds long and we'd like to think of them as stories with flair. With that being said, Reels don't have to be intimidating. They can be as easy as talking to your camera, just like stories. What makes reels so engaging is that you can add music and text to keep things interesting (very much like TikTok).

This offers a great opportunity for businesses to show a more human, less picture-perfect side – which can be great for building genuine relationships and strengthening community.

## ***What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?***

The usage of social media around the world is ever-increasing. It's without a doubt one of the most popular online activities that users

engage in. Social media statistics from 2019 show that there are 3.5 billion social media users worldwide, and this number is only growing. That equates to about 45% of the current population (Emarsys, 2019).

One of the reasons for this high usage of social media is because mobile possibilities for users are continually improving which makes it simpler by the day to access social media, no matter where you are.

In 2021, the smartest brands will understand where they fit into people's lives on social media. And they'll find creative ways of fitting into the conversation instead of trying to lead it.

## ***Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?***

We believe the days of influencer marketing as a “one-off” strategy are over. In 2021, influencers will increasingly be contracted on a recurring basis to boost brand loyalty and attention. Rather than switching on/off influencers for different campaigns, brands will work with influencers to continue to build their reputation because of their authenticity and ability to build trusting relationships with their follower's long term.

This will help lead to performance-based influencer marketing in the near future for brands. Influencer marketing budgets will see a significant increase, but to match the investment will come with equally heightened scrutiny on individual performance and ROI.

According to Alexander Frolov, CEO of HypeAuditor: “The global Instagram influencer marketing market will grow by 15% in 2021 to \$5.86B, up from \$5.095B estimated for the end of 2020. The global Instagram influencer marketing market capitalisation in 2019 reached \$5.24B.”

Influencer marketing is here to stay and will be more fruitful in the coming year.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

Always-on is more important to us because it provides us more opportunities to measure meaningful KPI's throughout the year. When we keep our marketing working year-round, it makes it easier for us to develop credible benchmarks for our success and the data will be far more valuable than the snapshot provided by event-based marketing strategies.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Our focus leans towards organic marketing but we also incorporate paid elements into our strategy. We feel that paid and organic social strategies work best in tandem to simultaneously engage with and nurture our followers while extending the reach of our brand to a broader audience.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

When developing our social media plans we believe that content comes first because the ideas are the goldmine and the channels are merely tools we use to distribute our content. However, it is important to note that all content does not belong on all channels. Something that is funny and mindless can go viral on TikTok but gain little traction on Facebook or LinkedIn. Make note of what types of content perform well on certain platforms and post accordingly.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

One of the most creative campaigns this year is the Spotify #2020Wrapped and that's because it offered users fun and insightful data visualizations of their music listening history that are meant to be shared on most social media platforms. In doing so, Spotify essentially created a winning ad campaign and let their users do most of the work of promoting it. That's pretty hard to beat. The Spotify Wrapped format is so recognizable, it even became a meme.

It showed us that we can recycle a great campaign year after year, only if you add some thoughtful updates to keep it interesting and by tying your campaign to an annual event it also helps build anticipation among your fans, helping it to grow bigger every year.

# BARKLEY



**Theresa Myrill,  
Vice President,  
Social Media, Barkley**

BARKLEY (USA)  
Founded in 1964, Barkley is an independently owned full service advertising agency that specializes in building modern brands for the modern consumer.

”With platforms engagement such as TikTok and Instagram Reels continuing to rise, brands and influencers alike have been investing into snackable video content creators to promote their products.”

# THREE BIG ONES

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## *What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?*

As we approach the end of 2020, advertisers have really shifted their social strategy over the last couple of months. Many brands have had to adapt to the new times in which brick-and-mortar stores continue to be closed or limited and have relied heavily on creating new content from inside of their homes. With this new shift brands have invested in more

streamlined and pointed content strategies across their social platforms. Brands have continued to understand the importance of transparency. In a time where many consumers feel consumed with the ever-changing outside environment, brands have been a lifeline by providing informative and authentic content more so than ever. In essence, consumers no longer have time for BS. They are looking for purpose from everything that they consume. This includes transparency about the way products are made, the individuals that work for the brand, and how the brand as a whole is investing in larger societal and economic initi-

atives beyond just their products. We see this with an increase of marketers speaking about the diversity of their staff, the employment that they offer for their company, and their plans to better themselves every day. These themes were born out of a year in which many people have felt isolated and slighted by actions that they have observed in the last 12 months.

Another theme we see emerging in 2021 is the shift to brands increasing their online offerings. Brands and companies like fitness and beauty have understood the need to shift their model to better accommodate consumers that are

at home. This could be offering online classes on their social apps, beauty at home tutorials of how-to selfcare, or offering better delivery services or efficient services for their products. As we continue to see the playing field shift almost on a daily basis, having a strong online, digital or delivery at home model for brands specifically on social is imperative for longevity.

Finally another theme that I have observed is a shift to adapting emerging platforms to build out or plus up already existing social strategies. For example this includes incorporating virtual meetup spaces on platforms such as AltSpace or virtual DJ sessions hosted on IG Live. This comes as a reaction to earlier in the year

where brands quickly learned that adapting to virtual resources would be beneficial however as restrictions began to lift and consumers started to venture outside of their homes again this was not necessarily a primary focus but a supplemental resource or extension of brands. Where I believe the difference lies is in the sustainability of virtual events. What will continue in 2021 and beyond is the yearning and desire for consumers to feel the connection between brand and consumer. Brands will continue to be creative with forging those bonds with consumers whether it's leaning into any of the above themes or finding new and creative ways of forging those dialogues moving forward and creating those spaces.

## ***What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?***

One statistic that I found to be interesting was that 70% of social consumers actually want the brand that they support to take a stand on political and social issues. While only a couple of years ago, brands keeping neutral ground was the norm; 2020 began to accelerate the desire for brands to take a stance on issues. As the year has closed out we have seen over the last several months that brands have stood

in solidarity with their consumers. This has sparked an uprising of smaller brands whose platform on cultural issues are clear and more and more consumers are drawn to the authenticity of those narratives. What is going to continue to be a challenge with this theme is that brands are going to have to tread a very fine line with not excluding or ostracizing potential consumers that don't necessarily share in their public views or standpoints.

Another statistic that continues to intrigue marketers is the exponential growth of TikTok. We have never seen an app reach a billion downloads so quickly, even outperforming Instagram. This evermore solidifies the importance of TikTok and continues to challenge brands to activate on the platform in a way that is right for their business. Simultaneously, as

a result, other platforms will continue to make updates and optimizations to their technology in order to compensate for their loss of market share. Likewise a continued increase in video content and TikTok influencers will increase and brands will increase investment in these platforms.

### ***Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?***

Overall influencer strategies will shift from one off activations to being a major player in how brands bring products and services to the forefront. For several years, influencer marketing has become integral for brands. We have consistently seen more and more invest-

ment into influencer marketing as technology evolves. Many of these influencer platforms such as Captiv8 have made the discovery and management phase easier and less cumbersome, therefore brand ambassadors and influencers will continue to be a tactic in integrated and evergreen strategies.

Indeed influencer marketing will continue to shift towards meaningful collaborations between influencer and brands. In the last 12 months we have seen so many collaborations with influencers whether it is health and wellness brands or celebrity designers for retail brands. The reason why influencers and celebrities continue to be monumental in propelling brands forward is their continued persuasion over their follower groups. Influencers have also been much more vocal about

truly supporting and using products and not just simply endorsing products just for cloud or pay. More so than not, I predict even more shifts away from celebrity to micro influencers for planned partnerships as consumers are craving authenticity and transparency. Many celebrities have started to independently speak about products without prompt to try to garner these connections.

Finally, from a content perspective, shifts to well engaging video content will continue to be on the rise. With platforms engagement

such as TikTok and Instagram Reels continuing to rise, brands and influencers alike have been investing into snackable video content creators to promote their products. While this continues to be the new frontier for content producers, marketers need to be cognizant that platforms such as TikTok skew to a much younger audience, therefore choosing the correct influencer/platform to show your content is imperative or you could risk wasting your investment. However, when used correctly these visual platforms can be incredibly impactful for showcasing usage and ritual

through short videos. What is also beneficial about these platforms is their shareability in app to other social platforms. Because of this, virality (or the ability to go viral) across other platforms is very likely, therefore community managers need to continue to mine for these opportunities. This can vastly increase earned performance across the platform. Seriously considering these platforms has the opportunity for great success if used properly and for the correct audience.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## **Campaigns vs. Always-on**

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

It depends. A well thought out seasonal social media push could be just as impactful as an always-on strategy. Always-on requires a well thought out content strategy that you can sustain while a seasonal campaign could be relevant for your business, such as Holiday campaigns. It depends on your business structure and what is feasible from a dedicated management standpoint.

## **Paid vs. Organic**

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Organic. While both require skill and strategy, organic content seems to be much more challenging as it relies on earned KPIs which are beyond your control, therefore well thought out content is imperative to justify investments in either time or production. Additionally I believe organic social is important to tell your brand story so what is shared from your business pages is imperative for shaping perception.

## **Content-first vs. Channel-first**

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

A BIG content idea! This is where I feel a lot of strategists miss the mark, it is so important to hone in on one big content idea, a great content idea that supports and enhances the brand equity. Once you land on a great idea, it should naturally lead you into one or two platforms where it can live and grow. Focusing on the channel first could possibly lead you to dead ends or flat ideas.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

Dove continues to champion authenticity and has a great understanding of a well thought out content strategy, and their #ShowUs campaign is no exception. I think this campaign sets the bar extremely high when it comes to visibility and authenticity of a brand and showcasing people that relate to everyone. Dove had proven over and over again that this isn't a trend for their companies but rather something that the brand is committed to continuously investing in; breaking gender stereotypes across all Unilever brands.

Why I find this to be important for 2021 is two-fold. Firstly, I believe consumers will be looking for consistency with brands. It is not simply about aligning yourself with a cause that is trendy or culturally relevant but staying consistent and authentic to these causes with everything that your brand does. Throughout 2020 we saw brands quickly jumping on the bandwagon with many of the cultural and social movements however had no intention of investing or truly helping the cause. I believe the #ShowUs campaign has been supported

consistently throughout the years and is a thread throughout many of the Unilever brands.

Another trend featured in this campaign that will continue into 2021 is their use of real people in their campaigns. More and more brands are realizing that using airbrushed and unrealistic individuals to model their products and services are no longer resonating with consumers. Consumers are looking for themselves within the products in a way that seems real and authentic. Not only did this campaign include all genders but also different segments of people that have consistently been non-vis-

ible in the ad world; handicap, non-binary etc. It's motivational, it's positive, it is real, all trends that I believe will be consistent into the new year to come.

What makes social media so powerful is its ability to be a communication tool; a 1:1 communication vehicle to your consumers. What is also daunting about this is that quickly consumers can take to the platform and say whether they do or don't support your views. This transparency in social platforms pushes marketers to strive for ideas and concepts that feel native to their brands.

# CIRCUS SOCIAL



**Kei Obusan,  
Head of Insights &  
Innovation,  
Circus Social**

CIRCUS SOCIAL (SINGAPORE)  
Circus Social is an award-winning digital data analytics and big data platform company that specializes in social listening and consumer & market research. Our proprietary social listening platform, 20/Twenty, tracks publicly available information and conversations across the internet on social media sites, public forums, blogs, news sites, and more.

“Brands or celebrities don’t dictate what choices people will make anymore – but rather, brands and celebrities should ride on what is trending.”

# THREE BIG ONES

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## ***What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?***

What we have seen grow exponentially is the democratization of content, because of people spending so much time at home due to the pandemic. With popular video platforms

having different features allowing users to be as creative as they want, anyone can be a content creator now. Trends in video content ranging from carpenters building houses in the wilderness, paint mixing, and even a man drinking cranberry juice while riding a skateboard have gotten millions of views online. Brands or celebrities don't dictate what choices people will make anymore – but rather, brands and celebrities should ride on what is trending.

## ***What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?***

One thing that we've also seen grow immensely in 2020 is social commerce. WARC has reported that social commerce orders in the first half of 2020 have doubled compared to the same time last year. Product availability in e-commerce and social media sites is now an expectation from consumers especially with

the increased popularity of live commerce. Marketers should find ways on how to creatively promote their products through live commerce and cut through hundreds of video content that users consume day in and day out.

### ***Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?***

Due to the “democratization of content”, anyone can be an influencer now. Because of this, marketers must always be on their toes

spotting the newest online celebrities that people are crazy about. It’s not just “traditional” celebrities like actors, singers, or dancers that brands should look out for. Actually, we’ve seen that micro-influencers sometimes are more effective than big celebrities in getting people to try products because their reviews are perceived to be more genuine. Influencers are very concerned about their brand image so they will only promote products that they truly like. Aside from just finding who the hottest influencers are, brands must also find those that have the right fit for them.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

As there's more noise on social media now, campaigns must be carefully planned by brands – while also considering what topics people care about during the time of the campaign launch. Posting on social media just for the sake of being present will not work anymore.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

It differs depending on the stage of the marketing funnel. For awareness, paid of course is more important. But as consumers move from first-time users to loyalists, brands must find a way to connect with them organically using owned channels.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

Despite the launch of different new social media channels in recent years, content is still definitely king. As a brand, what message you want to communicate must come first before deciding on which channel to publish it. Simply creating a TikTok account, for example, doesn't mean anything if you don't know what to put out on it and which audience segment you are trying to reach. And of course, differentiating versus trends and fads through methods like social listening will equip brands in creating evergreen content.

# A CASE IN POINT

**What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?**

If you think about it, K-pop groups are brands that are marketed just like products. There's no brand in the world that has perfected social media marketing better than the biggest boy band in the world: BTS. Brands can learn a lot from how BTS promote their activities and albums on social media. Big Hit Entertainment, the company managing BTS, knew how important social media was from the start. They had BTS members regularly post content like vlogs, photos, song & dance videos, and duet challenge videos on various platforms like Face-

book, Instagram, YouTube, Weibo, and TikTok. They even created an app called Weverse which allowed idols to interact with their fans. Through this constant presence in social media, they have grown the ARMY (the official name of BTS fans) to hundreds of millions. A testament to the success of this coordinated social media strategy is BTS' virtual concert Map of the Soul ON:E in Oct 2020. It had 993,000 viewers from 191 countries which translated to almost \$20M in sales. As big gatherings like concerts would still be likely limited in 2021, this social media strategy will continue to be the best practice next year in promoting events – not just for idol groups but much more for brands.

# DAY ONE AGENCY



**Victoria Gates-Fleming,  
Senior Director,  
Digital Strategy,  
Day One Agency**

DAY ONE AGENCY (USA)  
Day One is a creative communications agency with the ambition of stopping the world in its scroll with stories that earn a place in culture.

”In 2021, we’ll see more brands finding ways to bring in influencers earlier on in the process as strategists.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## ***What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?***

Coming of age in a global pandemic has had an enormous impact on Gen Z – upending education and the career ladder as well as social lives. We're in the midst of a cultural reformation, with traditional structures being overturned in favor of collaboration and co-creation. As a result, we are seeing a decentralisation of places and spaces where

young people are sharing their opinions, getting creative and challenging the status quo.

Beyond Instagram and TikTok, young people are flocking to new places to express themselves such as messaging apps and gaming communities. Discord, Roblox, Omegle and Animal Crossing have all seen a surge in popularity amongst Gen Z. Meanwhile, HAGS is a new app aimed at high schoolers to help them unite with their friends virtually using Snapchat as a foundation. (The CEO of HAGS is 23 year old Shuraya Shivji and the app has been backed by Google Ventures.)

As we look ahead to 2021, new platforms are also emerging that empower creators to have more intimate fan engagement models. On Circle and merchandise platform Fourth-wall, individuals can build communities with subscription models and sell their own clothing. We're entering a new era of creator culture focused on more intimate fan engagement and individual brand building.

## ***What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?***

According to the Poynter Institute, in the US alone over 33,000 journalists have been laid off, furloughed, or given pay cuts as a direct consequence of the pandemic. This crisis is accelerating trends that were already underway, such as the move from print to digital, as well as our collective turn towards social media as a news and entertainment source. (While TikTok has 800 million monthly active users, Instagram has over a billion.) Coupled with the cuts seen to advertising budgets in 2020, this puts even more pressure on brands to create social content that is genuinely scroll-stopping and connected to culture in order to break through and connect with the consumer directly.

## ***Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?***

The right influencers can give a brand so much more than just reach to a relevant audience – they can help a brand craft a compelling story or message that will genuinely resonate with the target audience. Everyone knows that tapping the right voices is a powerful way for a brand to earn credibility. But in 2021, we'll see more brands finding ways to bring in influencers earlier on in the process as strategists. Creators won't just be responding to briefs for brands, but helping to shape them too – and that's the power of true influence. Expect to see brands forming influencer collectives and creators shaping brand strategies.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

Campaigns. We're constantly consuming content, from the minute we first check our phones to the last scroll at night and it's harder than ever to really stand out as a brand in our feeds. Especially during these uncertain times, agile campaigns that are truly connected to a cultural insight are much more likely to break through with a target audience, increase share of voice and drive brand action.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Organic. You can always pay for eyeballs on any content with media spend. But you can't pay for true organic engagement, or the important "share".

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

The insight and idea first! No truly good idea can evolve without a killer insight. A good idea can live across multiple channels. Thinking channel-first can limit creativity.

# A CASE IN POINT

**What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?**

Throughout a tumultuous year, people have turned to brands on social media for solace as much as for entertainment. In 2020, we've seen a number of brands rise to the top on Instagram by creating their own unique and dreamy worlds that feel like insider's clubs. Brands such as Recess, AriZona ice tea, Baboon To The Moon and Starface have connected with a younger demographic by standing up

for causes, hosting events via IG live and giving their fan bases exclusive access to products and swag. As we look ahead to more uncertainty in 2021, consumers are still going to look to brands on social for escapism and comfort.

# DIFFERENT



**Michele Polico,  
Chief Innovation Officer,  
Different**

DIFFERENT (ITALY)  
Different is a communication company that drives brands to fully express their potential, and to hit people with significant content and messages. With a fluid structure of talented, complete thinkers, Different brings life to the vital energy of a brand.

”The social impact on marketing actions is more relevant than ever and brands should approach this theme with study and precaution, supporting causes and taking sides.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## **What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?**

2020 has seen a great worldwide change in the use of social media. People, as before, use it in order to find news, keep in touch and pass the time. But from this year on, brands have an increasing responsibility on what they communicate and how they work for their clients and the community. The social impact on marketing actions is more relevant than ever and brands should approach this theme with

study and precaution, supporting causes and taking sides.

## **What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?**

During the first weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic the week-on-week growth of grocery eCommerce sales increased by 81% in Italy. This trend emerged in a period of heavy lockdown but will probably continue to be one to keep an eye out for. Bigger brands but also local brands and shops that may be experiencing difficulties during this period may want to look into this. Social media advertising and

social media based shops can be a great tool to help reach the target everywhere.

## **Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?**

Another thing that has been clearer than ever this year is the importance of human relationships and emotions on social media. Influencers can be of great help when building relationships with users, if activities are created together with them. The most important thing to remember is that their follower bases are looking for their opinions in a sincere way, and usually dislike a branded tone of voice on their channel.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

I'd say this depends on the type of business, product and season, but generally campaigns are a best practice to increase awareness and hype in a short period, and building a "moment". Always-on activities, on the other hand, are crucial to capitalize the seeds that have been planted with campaigns. Think of it as a space rocket: you need full-throttle to break through the atmosphere, then you can switch off the engines and enjoy the ride.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Paid and organic relate to different goals. You simply won't reach either new people nor your fans without paid media, but once you have caught them, and they're interested in your story, you need deep and quality content to let them discover every side of the brand and product, from values to features. So I wouldn't say we "focus" more on either, they serve different purposes on a customer journey.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

Content is always the first step, and you can't give this up because content encapsulates the message, the idea, the philosophy. Once you have a clear, strong idea it won't be difficult to find the best way to express it through the channels you need.

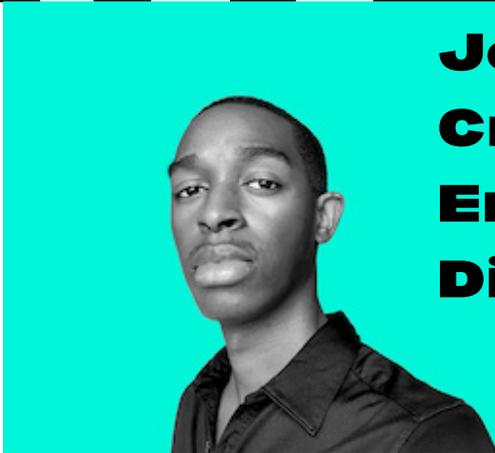
# A CASE IN POINT

**What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?**

I have seen many strong campaigns this year. The one which hit me the most? Casually, it's the Wudy AIA campaign made by Different! It marks a breaking point for communication in that sector, especially in our country. The insight: when the product is loyal to itself through years, the brand can go beyond it. So we created a capsule collection dedicated to the new generations, in order to add a new ironic layer to Wudy, something which Gen Z

is very sensitive to. The collection, driven by an influencer marketing strategy focused on trap and hip hop music, gave a clear message to the world: don't take brands (and yourself) too seriously. You can wear, eat and listen to anything you want. Merging these apparently opposite categories can pave the way for new digital scenarios in communication and branding.

# ENTERFIVE



**Joshua Tabansi**  
**Creative Director,**  
**EnterFive & Product**  
**Director, Versus LLC**

ENTERFIVE (US / UK / NIGERIA)  
Enterfive is a solutions agency.  
We launch and scale businesses  
through innovative digital solutions.  
Seeking innovation and finding  
intersections and opportunities in the  
unexpected. With every engagement,  
we build trust and foster long term  
partnerships. We're cuddlers.

“The most powerful marketing asset is  
your community. Work with them.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## **What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?**

Leverage your community to be the heralds of your message.

The most powerful marketing asset is your community. Work with them. Consumers are much more receptive to suggestions from friends and family than advertising. That's why word of mouth is great. But how do you tap into that?

You need to align incentives with the kind of behaviour you want to see, in this case, spreading the word. This summer, I was fortunate to witness several Fintech startups pull this off on a grand scale. I'm going to highlight a couple recurring strategies that worked.

First off, Meme contests. Whether you're a fan or not, memes are the most novel mediums of communication. You're able to capture nuanced themes that thousands of people can relate to with an image and caption. That's why they're so popular, they work. It takes finesse for a Brand to execute on a meme focused campaign. It's very easy to get it wrong due to the subtleties of culture and social relevance

of the material in the content. So, why not let your community come up with the memes for you? This summer, Twitter was ablaze with a flurry of contest submissions. Users were able to capture their experiences with the product, and stuff it into a hilarious meme. That makes a much larger impact on a viewer, than a simple recommendation.

An alternative I saw were creativity contests. Like the memes, this gave the communities a way to express themselves. Brands asked their members to submit entries for themed contests. And with no restrictions

on the medium, we saw incredible diversity in submissions. From paintings to, pumpkin carvings, to rap videos, and... I guess leaf carving is a thing? It's also a great way to create unique content for your brand.

These startups won by providing a platform for community members to engage. Involving them in every aspect. From deciding rewards, to shortlisting entries, and voting on a winner. To gain a ton of visibility, the contest hashtags were used with other relevant hashtags. These were industry specific that their audience would be searching on Twitter. The rewards for winners ranged from perks and free access, to monetary rewards.

Finally, there are bounties. These are more targeted initiatives than the contests. It's also very effective for smaller teams that need help with miscellaneous things. Bounties are public tasks issued by the Brand. This can be

anything: help design a logo, name a feature, make/organise a backlog, and more. I saw a community member create an explainer video for the product. This was then used as part of the product's onboarding material. You can imagine how proud the community member was to see their work used like that. This strategy is capable of creating loyal members. After they've invested their time in a bounty, they become brand ambassadors. The best part is, setting this up is easy. It could be a landing page, or a Slack channel with listed bounties. As community members completed bounties, they were rewarded for their effort.

The payoff for these strategies was huge. Some startups even couldn't handle the inflow of new leads at times. To replicate that kind of success, you need to bet on the right kind of incentives. Monetary rewards worked in these cases. This is because the products existed

in the Fintech space. This might not be applicable for other businesses.

I can only expect to see more initiatives that involve the community in the coming year. Don't see them as an audience, or users. They are the lifeblood of your business, and they want to be more involved. You just need to make it worth their time.

## What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?

*Brace yourself:*

The median CTR (Click Through Rate) for links on Tweets is 1.59%.

That's horrendous. You've spent hours researching, drafting, and editing a brilliant article. Eager to dazzle your audience with valuable insight. Only to share it on Twitter and 5 people check it out. Yikes!

This doesn't mean Twitter is the problem, no. And maybe you could improve that CTR

with some clever copywriting. But likely, it's because people would much rather consume that content on their timeline.

People prefer native content. They prefer to get all the information they need right in your social media posts. It's why native video on Facebook gets 10 times more shares than linking to a YouTube video.

Your content shouldn't just exist in your blog. That is a silo. You want your content to be a system. Able to exist in, and adapt to different environments.

You want to find out all the different platforms your audience likes to hang out in first. Then edit your content to fit those different places. You want to add value directly in those platforms.

You don't add value by dumping a link and forcing them to check it out. You need to wow them right then and there. But you can't just copy and paste your article on all those platforms. You need to tailor your content to fit each platform. After all, Twitter is not the same as Facebook, or Instagram.

Let's look at Twitter.

Twitter is great for long form content. But tweets can only accept 280 characters. That's where threads come in. Threads are a series of connected Tweets from one person.

Threads allow you to provide more context, an update, or elaborate on a point. In this case you'll be breaking up your article's points into tweets in a thread.

Threads are great for boosting reach and engagement. You can expect to receive 54% more engagement with threads. In fact, it's clear that tweets without links get better impressions. Though no one knows if that's because of user behaviour, or the design on Twitter's algorithm. Here are some tips I've picked up that help boost engagement even more:

1. Try tweaking the tone of your article to a more casual tone for better accessibility. You don't want the language you use to be too foreign from what the audience is used to on the platform.
2. Spend more time crafting the introduction of your tweet. You want to hook the readers. Give them an appetiser. Pose an intriguing question without giving away the answer. Begin a narrative, without giving away the conclusion. Highlight only a small part of your findings. Or present a bold claim, but don't explain how you arrived at it yet. Your following tweets in the thread are what you'll use to elaborate and provide context.
3. Finally, be sure to add images, gifs, and emojis (sparingly) to spice up certain points. These are not only fun to see, but help to drive home key parts of the article.

## **Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?**

Influencer marketing is maturing now. We've gone full circle. From partnering with celebrities, to micro-influencers, and even going nano.

We all see the value there. Marketers are able to reach more targeted audiences with influencer marketing campaigns. Compare that with consumers. They rely on social media as one of the most important sources of information when shopping. The stars really do align.

Despite this, the process of recruiting influencers is oftentimes scrappy. Different influ

encers have their demands, and brands don't have a consensus on compensation. This leads to a lot of back and forth, and one party taking advantage of the other. Influencers might not get compensated properly for their time and effort. While businesses are oversold on promises, only to realise meagre results.

The major problems here are lack of structure and data provision. More startups are looking to tackle this. Providing insight, and upfront performance metrics will be huge. This will allow brands to make quicker, better decisions on who to partner with.

Even more so in Africa. With our chronic lack of data, brands shoot in the dark when partnering with influencers.

Over here, we're seeing more and more brands looking for guidance on making these deci-

sions. Even outsourcing to product offerings that handle the recruitment process for them. They need to be able to gauge the potential results of a campaign.

The data is out there. But there's no one doing the work to clean up and organise that into insight.

We, at Versus, are looking into ways to help illustrate the value of an influencer. Based on factors like reach, engagement and value of their audience niche. This will help define the standards of different price buckets. This provides clarity for both parties. Influencers will more accurately see their place among their peers. And businesses can see engagement and results of an influencer's previous campaigns.

This is something we're also betting on at Versus. Our clients want to take a more perfor-

mance based influencer marketing approach. Visibility into the kind of results to expect from the potential influencers is key.

With better insight addressed, structuring the recruitment is the next step. We're seeing more long term relationships between brands and influencers. Often with rocky starts, that smoothen out as they get to know each other. What would help is more detailed influencer contracts. These would protect both the brand and influencer. Setting expectations for results based on the data both parties are already seeing.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

Always-on! It's important to create a content machine. Always delivering value year round, but having room to layer in more specific campaigns as the need arises.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Organic is the way to go. Paid helps to get an initial push. But, if you're making too many assumptions about what your audience wants to see, you risk wasting money. Organic growth allows you to learn and refine as you go.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

Your content should always come first. Once that value is defined, it can then be tweaked to suit the different channels you are pursuing.

# A CASE IN POINT

**What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?**

There was a notorious, one-man social media campaign that turned heads in the crypto space. An anonymous Twitter user by the name of BlueKirby. He single-handedly changed the trajectory of a decentralised finance protocol: Yearn Finance.

Yearn is a complicated beast. Several miles down the crypto rabbit hole. I wouldn't even try to explain it, but its complexity is what kick-started this story.

Yearn brought a ton of value to the space. But it was very hard to communicate that during the early stages. Unless you were 130+ IQ,

it was difficult to tell what the scope of the project was. As an investor, you need a decent picture of the project's future to really project returns.

Because of this complexity, investor adoption stalled. There wasn't much effort going into marketing because everyone was busy building. Developers weren't available (or able) to explain what Yearn was.

That's where BlueKirby strolled in. Due to the decentralised nature of the Yearn protocol, anybody could contribute. However, how they did so was up to them. BlueKirby was a very

passionate user of Yearn. Not a team member. Yet his actions grew the protocol adoption seven-fold. Here's how he did it.

He created a site that served as a wiki for the project. Riddled with witty humour, he broke down the inner workings of the project. More importantly, he painted a vision of where the project was going in the future. This helped onboard investors and users in droves. Pulling together the community that would build the Yearn ecosystem.

As for his social media strategies, he stuck where the community was: Twitter. He was always on, tweeting updates & hot takes. His tweets were laden with catch phrases that soon took a life of their own. His charisma

allowed them to propagate throughout the decentralised finance community.

His anonymity afforded him the ability to take risks. He used humour to communicate the value of the protocol.

What's another great way to communicate? Memes. This was the real driver. He leveraged his design skills to create amazing photoshop montages and memes. These helped illustrate developments in the Yearn ecosystem. Hilarious and catchy as they were — they went viral. As his following grew, renowned industry names such as Sam Bankman-Fried of FTX, and Andrew Kang of Mechanism Capital, took an interest and followed him.

BlueKirby was widely loved. So much so, that community members created a proposal to issue a monthly stipend to him. After all, these memes helped to drive Yearn to a \$1 billion market capitalization. This happened within months of its launch.

It was incredible to watch.

# HYLINK



**James Hebbert,  
Managing Director,  
Hylink UK**

## HYLINK (CHINA / UK)

Hylink is the first natively Chinese digital agency to move West and establish in the UK. Voted the most effective advertising agency in the Asia Pacific region with the prestigious Effie Award, Hylink is China's largest, independent full-service digital agency. Our mission is simple: to creatively bridge the cultural gap in digital marketing between China and the UK.

“Looking ahead to 2021, live streaming ecommerce will continue to play a key component in brands’ marketing strategies in China – and, I predict, in the West too.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## **What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?**

Live streaming ecommerce is the trend that marketers are most excited about. To give an idea of the power of ecommerce live streams; Viya, known as the queen of Chinese live streaming, hit a record 37m views in 2020 and makeup guru Austin Li once sold 15k lipsticks in 5 minutes. During Singles' Day, the world's

largest ecommerce festival, 30 live stream channels on Taobao Live generated USD 15m+ in sales.

Covid-19 has acted as a catalyst for live streaming ecommerce with it now being crucial for brands to stay relevant and drive sales. We've had clients that generate half of their annual sales in one day thanks to live streaming! Looking ahead to 2021, live streaming ecommerce will continue to play a key component in brands' marketing strategies in China – and, I predict, in the West too.

## **What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?**

China is full of impressive stats so I'll share one from a more unusual theme: farming. At the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, Taobao (the ecommerce platform owned by tech giant Alibaba) opened its food livestream channel with 41 million followers for free to Chinese farmers. Within 3 days of live streaming, farmers had sold 15 million kg of products!

## ***Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?***

In China in 2021 we'll likely see that influencer marketing will shift away from traditional influencers (called KOLs - Key Opinion Leaders) and move towards KOCs (Key Opinion Consumers). When Chinese consumers turn to digital for advice on purchase decisions they

look for trusted experts above all else. Brands no longer need to pay for expensive celebrity endorsements to promote their products and increasingly we'll see brands train their own consultants to share knowledge online. Many brands will also focus on private domain traffic, or online group chats and forums for people with shared interests, to establish greater affinity within their target audience.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

In China a combination of both always-on and campaigns is imperative. Chinese millennial consumers demand regular quality content and, from a cultural perspective, campaigns for shopping festivals throughout the year are significant as a main driver of sales.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

In China the entire social media architecture has been designed to function through paid media or KOL (Key Opinion Leaders) influencers to fuel the content. So creating great content alone, with no media spend, is often insufficient for brands to grow and engage effectively.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

If you're a brand new to China we always recommend that you understand your target audience first. From here you'll know how to tailor your content and choose which channels to best reach them. The key is to remember that Chinese consumers are now incredibly sophisticated – not only do their profiles change but the channels in which to reach them are innovating and evolving at an unbelievable pace.

# A CASE IN POINT

**What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?**

Alibaba's 'Cainiao Ocean' game is an impressive CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) campaign. From recycling ecommerce packaging consumers can earn points which in turn can unlock levels on a mobile game. Shared across social media for badge-value and to compete with friends, on completion of certain

tasks tokens can be contributed to real-life environmental projects around China – such as beach purification initiatives.

The campaign reflects the increasing importance of CSR for Chinese consumers. In the lead-up to Singles' Day, 75% of consumers said CSR would influence their purchase decision, according to a C2 Global Study. Looking ahead, brands need to embrace CSR – and prove their sustainability commitments to the power base that is the Gen Z millennial.

# JAZZ COMMUNICATION



**Oana Oprea,  
Digital Creative  
Planner,  
Jazz Communication**

## JAZZ COMMUNICATION (ROMANIA)

Jazz is a jam session of talents and expertise, with respect for personal expression and style. Since the beginning, in 2012, we aimed to become not an advertising agency but an endorser of unique talents, a credible content creator for brands. Thus, in our creative, strategy and client service team we have: published writers, architects, IT people, playwrights, poets, PR people and, as our name says it, quite a few musicians – drummers, pianists, guitarists... and even some very harmonious voices.

“For the next few years it should not be a question of whether we work with influencers or not, but how we do it.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## ***What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?***

Video and live streaming formats will become the New Norm. We saw that 2020 was the year in which video content creation grew exponentially, but also that it was a year of people getting used to video formats and being able to interact with brands in real-time online and examine a product from home.

TikTok played an important role in accelerating video creation and consumption and we can

see how it gives rise to several trends, both in terms of content and formats and also in terms of people's habits and expectations. If they haven't done so yet, it's time for marketers to take the platform seriously because it's a great source of insight about people of all ages and a source of inspiration for creative challenges, transitions and video editing trends. The impact of the platform can be seen by the fact that the content there is already distributed in other mediums (Instagram Stories, Reels, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), but also by the fact that now most social media platforms have introduced their own options of short videos formats, similar to those on TikTok. With users with a small attention span, who are accustomed to quickly

scrolling between short and entertaining videos, it will be harder than ever for brands to get people's attention, so the creative value of the branded videos must reach the next level in 2021.

There is only one major competitor for the short video formats and that is the live video format. Live videos have also been amplified by the pandemic context and adopted to a greater extent by both brands and content creators. Its main advantage is that it creates an immediate and intimate connection with the audience. It also brings a layer of authenticity and more credibility compared to traditional videos. Since we all had to get used to video

calls for work, school, meetings with friends and other hobbies, we feel more comfortable watching less processed videos and more personal ones. This is also a blessing for marketers, because it offers the opportunity to create engaging content with minimal production budgets and efforts.

In terms of audience involvement, live videos are a good option both because they are prioritized by the algorithm, but also because people react better to them as it activates a sense of urgency. Research shows that people watch a live video 3x longer, and comment 10x more often compared to a regular on-demand video. A first instinct would be to say that YouTube should be the first choice when it comes to live video, but competition is very active in this regard and mobile-first apps are gaining ground. Live videos on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have gained a lot of popularity over the past year and they continue to grow, especially as they have monetization

options for content creators. As for brands, they should adapt to the new formats fast and show their products as naturally as possible. The mix between short / live video formats and influencers is one of the most effective in terms of promotion.

### ***What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?***

The statistics about Instagram and, more specifically, Instagram Stories are the ones that I find the most impressive in terms of considerations and purchase intention. Since 62% of people say they have become more interested in a brand or product after seeing it in Stories, 80% of users are looking for products on Instagram and 81% decide here whether to buy or not (Hootsuite, 2020), the impact that the platform has on sales is quite clear.

Thus it is essential to have a very clear Instagram content strategy that does not neglect ephemeral content.

What I find fascinating about the evolution of Instagram is the way it managed to create a connection and a real relationship between users and brands. The inspirational specificity of the platform and the engaging tools made it easy for brands to create lifestyle content that resonates with people. Most brands have integrated into the channel so well that people don't see them as "enemies" but as "content creators" whom they enjoy watching and listening to. Over 200 million Instagram users visit at least one business profile daily, 77% think that brands are creative, 76% think they are entertaining and 72% think they have an important role in building communities. (Hootsuite, 2020)

Stories have become a central part of the platform, as evidenced by the diversity and

complexity of the tools to create them. For brands, these tools make it easier to reach out to the audiences, to interact and gain insights – so an effective strategy should include a lot of testing and experimentation in this area. Features like “Ask me a question”, Polls or Quizzes are great features in discovering needs and gaining insights from the audience, but also to introduce benefits and product descriptors, while features like Filters, Donation, Music or GIFs are also good starters for UGC mechanics.

Being ephemeral content, stories do not have to be high on production-value – they give brands the opportunity to interact in real time, to show a look behind the scenes and to bring the community closer. Marketers should keep in mind that the human presence in this format is almost as important as on TikTok and in the next few years should consider introducing employees, relevant influencers or satisfied customers to the content. In addition to setting

clear content goals and experimenting with the latest tools, it is also very important to set a relevant frequency. One third of the most viewed Stories are from businesses – and brands post an average of 2.5 stories per week (Hootsuite, 2020), a number which is a relief to many marketers. Users appreciate a lower frequency but higher quality content, which is entertaining or offers relevant information or promotions.

The general trend should be to do more social listening on Stories and to address the topics of interest in a way that is as much adapted to the platform as possible. Of course, engagement should not stop at Stories, because newer formats (such as IGTV and Reels) are good environments in which a dialogue with the community can be built. Content does not always have to come as a surprise to the community, but also as a response to specific needs identified over time by observing the habits of online behavior and interaction.

## **Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?**

Influencer marketing will be bigger and better. Even if the public as well as marketers have a love-hate relationship with influencers, it does not mean that influencer marketing is declining, quite the contrary. More and more brands have started using influencers – and now marketers are in the position to raise the standard and come up with new ways to bring added value for the brand through collaborations with influencers.

One of the main trends will be the use of influencers as content creators and not amplification channels. This is also due to the fact that the audience is bored of the strictly commercial communication of the influencers and will notice when the content is not authentic. Briefs to influencers will be much more complex and will require real creative input, clear story-

telling and more diverse formats. It is no longer enough for the influencer to present the product, they will also have to integrate it into a story or a concept that is either inspirational or entertaining. All the while, it is essential to be authentic and well presented in relation to the influencer's lifestyle. The work process will also be a co-creation, in which marketers can come up with very clear requirements, addressed as to a creative, not a transmitter. With valuable input from both sides, the content created will be of better quality and more relevant to the audiences of both the brand and the influencer.

Another trend is the better segmentation of influencer categories and the appearance of more niche influencers. As more and more categories appear, influencers will be looking to differentiate themselves and create content that is as unique as possible. This only makes it much better for brands, because they can

choose niche influencers, not generalist ones who have a homogeneous audience and try to communicate everything to everyone. Micro-influencers are those who have more specific passions and audiences, so they will continue to grow in popularity. Besides the fact that they have much better engagement, they also have more authentic content and are more selective in collaborations, which makes them critical for your influencer strategy. A selection of several micro-influencers from different communities helps to reach diverse audiences – and can offer good insights into the degree of interest of different communities about your product or service.

The next trend in terms of influencer marketing is the increase of collaborations with video content creators. Naturally, if video formats are favored by the algorithm, content creators are also oriented towards those dynamic formats. And since the mix of influencers and

video content is the most effective in getting people's attention, collaborations with video creators will continue to grow in the coming years. Considering that TikTok has raised the level in terms of the creativity with which videos are edited, users' expectations are quite high on other platforms also.

Indeed, influencer marketing has become much more prominent in the communication mix and even if some marketers are more skeptical, it is just a period of accommodation, because collaborations with influencers, whether smaller or larger, will continue to develop. As long as the correct selection criteria are set and influencers really have relevance to the product or service and invest creatively in content, the results should exceed the objectives. For the next few years it should not be a question of whether we work with influencers or not, but how we do it.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

Of course, the best option is a combination of these two, but lately the preferred approach is to have shorter, campaign-based projects. Given the uncertain context, the focus should be on shorter, tactical campaigns, applied to certain needs, in order to take the pulse of the audience and draw learnings for future always-on campaigns.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Certainly, the focus has shifted a lot to Organic and Earned Media. Regarding Paid Media, well-done planning is essential, because an investment with a too high frequency can affect the algorithm and thus the exposure in an unfavorable way in the long-term.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

Always start with the channel and its specifics. Social media is very effervescent, all kinds of formats and features appear constantly and they dictate behaviors and trends and establish the criteria under which the content can grow.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

A campaign that I consider to be a good example in terms of community involvement and use of social media tools and formats is a CSR campaign which I worked on recently for ING Bank Romania and Inima Copiilor, an association that helps children with medical problems, especially heart disease. At Jazz Communication, social campaigns are an important pillar and we are constantly trying to innovate

in terms of emotion, approaches and formats. Social media has an increasingly important role in amplifying these. Also, in this project we took into account user behavior, new social media formats and tools, and we set out to create a campaign that would generate buzz.

Social media campaigns that aim to create user generated content are always a challenge. The same thing happened here, especially considering that we had a rather delicate subject. The task was to raise awareness around the cause, to involve people emotionally and to obtain donations for special missions that would allow vital surgeries for

children with heart disease. Through this campaign we wanted to start a discussion with people and not only to involve them emotionally in the cause but also to reward their social media actions with a concrete donation.

The strategy included two key points. The first one referred to the use of channels. We wanted to use best performing formats and have clear mechanics – and an essential part of this was to propose a social media action which people would feel comfortable to do to raise awareness. It had to be an action that gets them emotionally involved and makes them feel that what they are doing helps

beyond the donation itself. The second strategic point was about emotion and finding a sensitive approach, but in an optimistic way. People's actions had to come as support and encouragement for the little fighters.

Considering the ING social media audience, we started from the tension that for parents, the most unsettling sound is silence. The silence given by the lack of attention for the cause and by the waiting lists and the phones that don't ring with expected news. We used this silence to motivate people to make noise on social media for the little fighters. And how

could people better empathize with the need of a regular rhythm in the children's pulse if not through the rhythm of the music, which makes our heart beat powerfully. What they had to do to "set the rhythm in children's hearts" was a very easy and positive action: on Facebook, we invited people to comment below our campaign video the song that makes their heart beat strongly, and on Instagram to share their favorite encouragement song in Stories, using the Music tool. People reacted very well to the campaign and UGC began to flow, breaking the silence about the cause and donating for a healthy rhythm for children.

A good learning from this campaign is the fact that no matter how sensitive a subject is, social media tools can be used for more than their usual purpose, but it needs a mechanic that can be easily done. Of course, the creative layer and the intensity of the emotion play an important role in motivating the user, but just as important are the choice of tools and mechanics. You have to have a fine mix between an action that is easy to do, but one that still represents something. The challenge in this regard will be to find this mix and use the tools in a surprising and innovative way. From icons, emojis, GIFs, stickers or comments, 2021 will be a year in which any small aspect can be reinterpreted and overturned in a way that no one would have thought.

# KING JAMES GROUP



**Danny Pinch,  
Executive Creative  
Director,  
King James Group**

KING JAMES GROUP (SOUTH AFRICA)  
King James Group is a 23-year old, independent South African agency, made up of multiple specialist companies and divisions that work in tandem. We put idea explosion ahead of idea integration. Everything starts with a bold idea, and where that idea comes from in the group is irrelevant. In our experience, the best ideas have a flammable quality. Everyone that encounters it wants to add to it, with interest, and in doing so the idea is exploded through the group into whichever mediums make it more powerful. This collaborative structure has a significant effect.

”If there’s one piece of advice we repeat the most when it comes to social it’s “be more human”.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## *What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?*

Perhaps the biggest trend I'd describe as the "TikTokification of social" which is a shift from very polished content to a much looser, more playful, very human approach. This is an aesthetic change that goes beyond TikTok but I think its rise (and Stories as a format) has given social a different flavour.

There is still a space for crafted social posts but there is an increased playfulness and spontaneity that I think we need to pay attention to. The more successful brands are adapting this language to feel more naturally at home in social spaces. On the flipside brands that are bringing an ATL style approach to social are out of place with this aesthetic shift. If brands are going to enter the social space we need to behave like guests and that means understanding the language our audience speaks.

This isn't just a visual aesthetic or a change in tone to sound more human, it also applies

to the themes of conversation we have. This year in particular has made many more willing to show vulnerability and have more open conversations. For brands, there is an opportunity to help people have these conversations and be a participant in (relevant) conversations.

If there's one piece of advice we repeat the most when it comes to social it's "be more human". No one likes to talk to a faceless corporate entity but they might like to talk to some of the human beings that represent brands.

## ***What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?***

The question for me is what is a long-term shift in behavior. It does look like much of the world going into lockdown accelerated trends and introduced people to new formats. There has been growth in longer-form video and audio that I think will stay with us. I think we have to include live streams and virtual events as a trend that will stick with us. The thought of going on another Zoom event or tuning into a live-streamed exercise class fills me with dread but when the dust settles I think this is a behavior that will stay with us. It makes a lot of sense to tune into a conference or event you can't make it to and I think we have learned a lot about how to host live online experiences.

Ecommerce is the other trend acceleration that you just can't ignore. Stats around how well Amazon did were pretty eye-opening and just shows that those that were investing had made the right call. Locally in South Africa, I think many companies failed the stress test of delivering e-commerce at scale and opened up opportunities for smaller players that could deliver a more personal service quicker. I've found it interesting and inspiring to see smaller businesses get to grips with eCommerce as a way to survive the year. So from a social perspective, I think we have to pay attention to the tools and formats that effectively drive sales.

## ***Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?***

Influencer marketing has become frustrating not because it can't be effective but because

it's being approached like a media buy. We always advise clients against putting out bulk briefs to influencers asking to get them to feature a product or brand. At times it feels like influencer marketing is just the reinvention of the shopping channel and just feels like it does nothing for the brands involved.

If possible, we only work with influencers (or maybe "creators" is a better term) when there is an idea that we think they're right for. If we think their take on a subject helps or their creative approach could add something to the idea, then we work with them. When you have the right idea and the right influencer then you can make some magic happen. Influencers often have loyal audiences and while they tolerate them doing promotional posts, they can get excited if a brand partnership is creatively surprising.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

If I absolutely had to pick it's Always-On – it's too often neglected but it's the foundation on which campaigns should be built. There's no point being amazing for a couple of weeks and a corporate dirge for the rest of the year.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

There is a role for organic but really, it's 2021, there is no scale without paid media. There are very few brands that could get away with an organic-only approach.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

I'd say channels come first. Each social channel has a creative language of its own. If you don't understand what channel you're working in it's like writing an ad that you don't know which country it's running in.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

Ok so this isn't exactly a campaign but I'm a big fan of what HBO do on their social channels. Yes they have great content to work with, but there are a lot of entertainment brands that just post show trailers constantly with very little engagement. There is sense of playfulness and a real understanding of how the channels work in their posts. They also manage to do a lot

with a little – some of their biggest ideas have very little production behind them, but just are great thoughts that really get their audience engaged. Loved the Sopranos name generator, but they are consistently on point. I often use HBO as an example of a brand that understands they're not there to advertise to their audience (in the traditional sense) –they're there to entertain them first.

# LAUNCH



**Babs Watson**  
**Director of**  
**Brand and**  
**Content,**  
**Launch**

**Erin Dodds**  
**Senior Account**  
**Manager,**  
**Launch**

LAUNCH (UK)

We're Launch, one of the UK's leading independent creative brand comms agencies. Driven by creativity and exceptional talent, we cover the full range of through the line disciplines, from digital and content to experiential and media relations. What sets us apart? For us, it's providing our clients with long term, ownable 'creative territory', regardless of the channel. It's a skill we've honed over 20 years, across hundreds of brands and thousands of campaigns. And we call our process to get there Territory Define™.

“In 2021 influencer marketing will embrace the 3Ls:  
long, live and lo-fi.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## ***What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?***

So long Tiger King, hello TikTok. With television and film production largely on hold thanks to COVID and the future of cinema unclear, streaming platforms and TV will be short on finished content in 2021. But users won't be short on boredom and are desperate to fill the hours stuck inside. They'll turn to TikTok and YouTube for their video content, and creators can fill that void. The silver screen may dim in 2021, but the one in our hands glows ever brighter.

## ***What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?***

Children's social media consumption has increased 'a lot'\*

\*Statistic from a poll of exasperated parents on our daily agency zooms. May or may not be representative of a nation balancing home schooling with working from home.

## ***Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?***

The best influencers of 2020 provided us with a pick me up in lockdown – their lunch time IG Lives breaking up the groundhog days of WFH, inspiring us to pick up a side hustle or perfect our side plank.

In 2021 Influencer Marketing will embrace the 3Ls: long, live and lo-fi. We're all still bored as hell and desperate for entertainment and inspiration. However, we're also all fed up with those flaunting wealth, freebies and ignorance during a tumultuous time when inequality has been exasperated for many.

We'll keep on doomscrolling, watching longer content, but it better not be you and 40 of your closest friends partying on a private island. All tested negative and all socially distanced, a likely story. Influencers who take us behind the scenes with real-world experiences in real-time will keep us hooked. The new reality (IG) TV.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

We scroll through social media morning, noon and middle of the night. Users are always-on, so social needs to be too. And brands looking to keep consumers coming back for more better make sure they are always front of mind. Would you date someone who takes you on a fabulous night out then ghosts you, only to reappear months later like a zombie begging for your attention? Block and delete. Playing hard to get has its place, but it's steady and reliable romance we're after for a long-term love affair.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Show me the money, honey. While big tech may beg to differ, money talks if you want to be seen on any of the major social platforms. Organic can only get you so far, and although they won't admit to it, the platforms will reward your organic posts in the algorithm if you're willing to shell out a little cash for their advertising. Just look at Instagram and how it's morphed into QVC. And expect it to stay that way, especially on Instagram and Facebook, unless the Feds have their way.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

Great content should thrive on any channel, right? But then along came TikTok to remind us all channels are not created equal. Perfect for dancing tweens and chancing comedians, but not the platform you would choose to premier your 3 min Christmas tearjerker. Go evangelize Great Auntie Susie on Facebook, while you convert her grand-niece on TikTok or IG. With the maturation of short form content, live streams becoming the status quo and our appetite for entertainment increasing during the pandemic, a 'one size content fits all channels' solution will no longer make the cut.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

It's been a whopper of a year, and as we've strived to stay connected as a global community, social media has emerged as the front line in communications. Many brands have been using their social media channel as a force for good, connecting with customers on a more emotional level and creating legions of loyal followers who will outlast lockdown. But the social media feed that really took the crown for us this year was Burger King, continuously serving up the feel-good factor across their social feeds while maintaining

their challenger edge. And as Europe entered a second lockdown in the run up to Christmas, Burger King's call to arms to support the entire hospitality sector was the festive feeling we all needed. From urging fans to order a Big Mac in support of their rivals to opening up their Instagram feed for smaller independents to advertise their signature dishes, this year Burger King has acted as a guiding light for social media managers looking to spread some joy with real bite as we move into a new year. We bow down to the King.

# OSAKA LABS



**Friday O'Flaherty,  
Managing Partner,  
Osaka Labs**

OSAKA LABS (UK)

Osaka Labs is a Content Activation Studio built for future-thinking businesses. We focus on the digital aspects of brand, social and user behaviour to strengthen connections with consumers no matter where they spend their time on the internet.

“Always-on social is the modern equivalent of walking the shop floor, where you can learn a lot about your fans and your detractors.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## **What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?**

Shoppable social media is one of the exciting growth trends for 2021. We've seen a renewed appreciation for social media this year, especially as a bridge to have genuine conversations with consumers, but also because it's multifaceted by nature. It's a focus group, an advertising platform, a place to test and learn, to share ideas, to hear ideas, to respond to

questions, to influence purchasing decisions and now it can be your shop front as well.

Livestreaming eCommerce has been extremely popular in China for a while. The market reached \$4.4 billion in 2018 and continues to grow at pace. Snapchat's integration with Amazon and the recent launch of Facebook Shops are also contributing to make social media increasingly easy to shop. The growth in shoppable social media is good news for brands that have invested in social and are digitally agile, but a wakeup call for businesses that have out-of-date legacy systems or partners.

## **What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?**

There are a couple of statistics, at opposite ends of the spectrum, that I find interesting.

- 47% of U.S. Gen Zs used TikTok – double the number who watched live television on a TV channel each week (GWI USA Q2 2020)
- 70% of internet users aged 55-64 say they've bought something online in the past month, and 37% are planning to continue doing so more frequently when (the pandemic) is over (Hootsuite October 2020)

We were early into TikTok and have seen significant improvements in the platform. TikTok’s growth has been incredible, with the number of users now almost 1 Billion world-wide. Sure, there is still some naivety in how it deals with marketers and agencies, but it’s learning fast and growing even faster. As an outlet for creativity and a ‘sound on’ platform, it expands the way brands can articulate their message. If you want to connect with Gen Z, now is a great time to get involved and, as the (TikTok created) saying goes, “Don’t make ads, make TikToks”.

It’s easy to get carried away with new platforms and younger audiences but the Boomers are showing up in increasing numbers online too. They’re spending more time with social media, digital video, gaming, mobile payments and online shopping. GlobalWebIndex reported a 66-point increase in baby boomers discovering new brands

and products via social media. It appears that Baby Boomers love the internet too and digital marketers would do well to remember it.

### **Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?**

Influencer marketing is maturing, being redefined and will continue to grow. The desire to see influencer content is still growing. 29% of internet users, across 7 countries, frequently watch livestreams from influencers they follow on social media. What’s more, 80% said they’re likely to buy products as a result (Globalwebindex Dec 2020).

We’ll still have to endure some vacuous brand endorsements, but there appears to be a greater understanding around the role of influencers, the advantages of working with them,

their limitations and, for audiences, when their content is being commissioned. There is also greater breadth and diversity of influencers now. Their ranks include a number of great entertainers that may not have been discovered if it was left up to old-school ‘talent scouts’.

Influencers can fast track your brand into audiences that might otherwise be hard to connect with, launch new products, demonstrate how to use them, and add a real lifestyle element to your brand... they can also cause more trouble than they’re worth. Brands need to be clear about why they’re using influencers and specifically what they hope each influencer will achieve. It’s good to provide guidelines for influencers but ultimately you want them to engage their audience as they normally do. Otherwise, you might as well buy an actor.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

Go for always-on over campaigns if you can and enjoy all the benefits of social media. It's the modern equivalent of walking the shop floor, where you can learn a lot about your fans and your detractors. Plus, if you work in an industry like FMCG you have the additional benefit of engaging with your retailers. Campaigns are good to add to an always-on strategy, or if your budget is too small to be active all year, but regardless of what you choose, make sure you're also paying for reach.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

The big question for me is not paid versus organic but whether you can separate content from the media. Should both be done inhouse or externally, two agencies or one? It's important for the content and media to run in harmony, to be very specific to each platform, for all activity to be connected and to remain agile - optimizing content and media together in real-time. On most platforms you will need paid media to achieve sufficient reach, but you also need content that's interesting to your audience. In 2021 I'd like to see more joined up digital marketing, with audiences enjoying great brand experiences, no matter where on the internet they jump in.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

We still start with insight about the audience. That includes understanding what channels they're on and how they're using them. We then make content specifically for each channel. I think we've all realized that TV ads on social don't work...haven't we?

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

TikTok has been a welcome distraction throughout 2020 and one of my favourite viral moments was started by Nathan Apodace @420doggface208 cruising to 'Dreams' by Fleetwood Mac, whilst drinking a very large bottle of cranberry juice. Beyond the joy of the moment and the amazing number of recreations, I was impressed with Ocean Spray's response. They stayed silent and let momentum build. Celebrities, influencers, US

state governors, and members of Fleetwood Mac jumped in on the trend. Only when the time was right did Ocean Spray get involved, and they participated in a very sincere way. Their CEO recreated the video (which was a given really) and then gave Nathan a new truck, filled with Ocean Spray. It was a great example of a catch and play campaign, instead of a traditional push to market approach. The audience can be your brand hero if you pay attention and let them lead the way.

# PIABO



**Felix Willikonsky,  
Executive Director,  
Digital Strategy,  
PIABO**

PIABO (GERMANY)

PIABO is the leading full-service PR partner in the media landscape for the digital and innovation industry, headquartered in Berlin. For its forward-thinking clients like Shopify, GitHub or Stripe, PIABO achieves outstanding media presence. With its team of multidisciplinary advisors, PIABO offers services in public relations, strategic social media management as well as content marketing.

”Sometimes it is better to be a top influencer on a competitor platform like Triller than doing what everyone else does on TikTok.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## *What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?*

I think the most interesting trend is that social media platforms like Twitter and TikTok are losing their unique selling points. Every platform has stories now and the videos are getting shorter and shorter. Brands and people need better strategies, more content production and the distribution is getting more time consuming. Spoiler alert: 2021 will see many burned out social media managers.

## *What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?*

One third of the world's population is on TikTok which is blowing my mind. If you still underestimate the platform you make a big mistake.

## *Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?*

Sometimes it is better to be a top influencer on a competitor platform like Triller than doing what everyone else does on TikTok. The possibilities are becoming more diverse and the platforms more varied. This means more opportunities for brands and creators to get creative and make an impact.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

Without a strong always-on, your campaigns fall flat. They need a higher media investment and they won't be remembered if you as a brand don't communicate consistently at a high level. A good always-on also creates virals, which strengthen a brand just as much as large campaigns. I think Netflix and DAZN were good examples of this in their early days.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Organic storytelling is the best indicator of whether something is working or not and whether you are communicating correctly. Strong brands are built on communities and hitting the right tone. I still hear from smart people that organic reach is dead and that success must always be demonstrable. However, my gut feeling is still more important to me than a spreadsheet.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

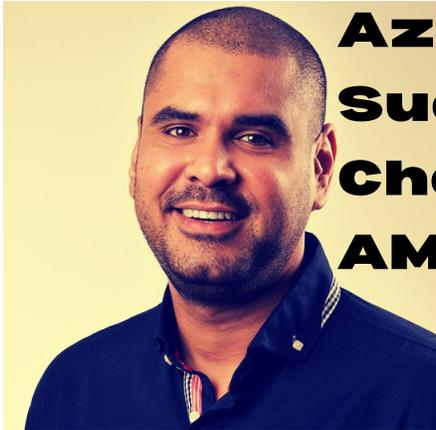
It depends, but most of the time the channel strategy comes first. I love to have a plan, but I also love to throw plans out the window. Also, social media is fast-moving and requires a good grasp of things so you can react well.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

Without a doubt, that was “One Girl One Cup” for me. From the idea to the content distribution, it was innovative for me, with attitude and a clear message. It also fit perfectly into the zeitgeist, was talkable and broke taboos that need to go. That’s the kind of thing that impresses me.

# SUDAN DIGITAL



**Aziz Musa, CEO,  
Sudan Digital &  
Chairman,  
AMC Group**

SUDAN DIGITAL (SUDAN)  
Sudan Digital is the leading digital marketing agency in Sudan and one of the fastest-growing digital marketing agencies in the Middle East. Our roots are Arabian and our passion is for digital. We operate in Khartoum and Dubai and deliver digital marketing solutions for clients across the globe.

”There’ll always be a market for single post, quick and dirty shout outs, but real influencer marketing will evolve to be value driven and long term.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## ***What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?***

Social channels are born (see TikTok) and social channels die (see G+) but what remains true is the true purpose of social media channels for marketers: to access audiences. In 2021, I'd expect to see further acquisitions, I'd be extremely surprised if TikTok remained with ByteDance simply because of the amount of data and user interaction they have collected.

As Facebook's brands are starting to merge on the front end, the backend already merged some time ago giving advertisers a wealth of data and insights in order to target more effectively. However, there remain underserved markets within social media, especially in our region 'Arabia'. As content creators start to explore different channels in this region, we find ourselves in the unique position of having extremely low CPA's whilst retaining higher than global averages conversion rates and transaction values. This value won't exist forever, and so marketers should continue to look globally for audience value where their client brands can benefit.

## ***What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?***

52 minutes: This is the average amount of time TikTok users spend on the app per day. Compare that to Instagram which is 28 minutes and Facebook which is 35 minutes. With nearly 1 hour a day of user engagement time, TikTok has revolutionized the engagement formula without actually changing the underlying premise of what content engagement looks

like. So marketers should consider two things:

1. What aspects of the TikTok Algorithm can you exploit to drive engagement further?
2. What lessons from TikTok's engagement can you transpose to other client brands on other channels?

## **Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?**

We have to face facts when it comes to influencers: clients are starting to lose trust. The data shows that influencer marketing is effective when delivered correctly and comparatively, is no different to old fashioned billboard endorsements from movie stars in the 60's.

The principle remains the same; Personal Awareness + Brand = Trust. However, the variable has become a "Personal Awareness". Clients are becoming savvier around selecting influencers to work with and agencies need to do the same. A client of ours is working with, what I would term, a new kind of influencer; The Entrepreneurial Influencer. The campaigns are focused around travel, and specifically around driving actual bookings for travellers to a specific destination. Working together they have created long term value and build 'line of sight' between the client's influencer spend and new revenue entering the client's business. This is the future of Influencer marketing in 2021. There'll always be a market for single post, quick and dirty shout outs, but real influencer marketing will evolve to be value driven and long term.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

Both are important but “always-on” is more important. One of the core facets of all digital media is our ability to react. This is what differentiates our channels from traditional channels. We can react, quickly, comically, insightfully, effectively. We need to continue to build that capability, and use channels to react to what is happening.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Sadly Paid. I say sadly because this isn't by choice. The reality is that over the years and particularly in 2020, organic growth is becoming as mythical as the Methuselah sword. That doesn't mean that all focus goes into Paid, not at all. It just means we have to search for value wherever we can and continue to try to deliver content and value that drives organic engagement, whilst being willing to give our content paid pushes when needed.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

Channel first. This isn't complicated, all social content is derived from an objective, that objective is derived from a client need, the client need is targeted at a certain persona and that person exists on specific channels. So when we know who we are targeting, we know where they exist. Therefore channel comes first, then content.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

Red Card to Violence. It's not a social media campaign specifically, but like all great campaigns, it spread to social very quickly.

# ZULU ALPHA KILO



**Sean Bell,  
Head of Digital,  
Zulu Alpha Kilo**

ZULU ALPHA KILO (CANADA)  
Zulu Alpha Kilo is a Toronto-based creative company that has built a reputation as an industry outlier and is one of the most respected independent agencies in the world. On two occasions, Zulu has won top honors from Ad Age, as Small Agency of the Year and International Agency of the Year.

”If you put the community first there’s a good chance you’ll be rewarded with positive engagement.”

# THREE BIG ONES

## *What is the most interesting trend regarding social media that marketers should be aware of in 2021?*

The ubiquity of AR and the ability to get people actively engaged with creative. With five platforms now supporting the format, potential reach for AR experiences is much bigger than it was and it can deliver on a range of objectives. So whether it's a try-before-you-buy scenario or a brand building experience, there's an opportunity for meaningful interactions with a brand or product at scale.

## *What is the most interesting (social media) statistics you've seen this year?*

A recent Ghent University Study found that runs shared to Strava were 8X more likely to receive engagement than Twitter. This is an obscure data point I know, but it indicates that there's value in targeting smaller, more engaged communities if it serves a purpose. Andreessen Horowitz calls these "vertical communities" and brands are already inserting themselves organically or through ad formats in gaming, dating and reading based platforms. If you put the

community first there's a good chance you'll be rewarded with positive engagement.

## *Where is influencer marketing headed in 2021?*

More creativity. It's refreshing to see a partnership that is memorable and doesn't feel like a transaction. This doesn't necessarily need to be sentimental or values based, humour can work too. And it might mean brands do fewer, bigger, better partnerships to get to more meaningful content.

# THREE QUICK ONES

## Campaigns vs. Always-on

*When planning the yearly social media activities, which is more important?*

I'm punting here but both. Spikes in conversation should complement an ongoing narrative. Having both also supports a more robust testing approach.

## Paid vs. Organic

*When doing social media marketing, which of these you focus more on?*

Paid. This argument is settled in my mind. The bigger question to ask is about effectiveness in the paid context.

## Content-first vs. Channel-first

*When making social media plans, which of these two comes first?*

Content-first. At Zulu we believe that the idea should lead. If after internal debate the team thinks it will deliver on the marketing goal then the distribution conversation begins. This could result in a single channel communications plan or something cross-platform. It all depends how flexible the concept is and how that connects to the audience behaviours wherever they are.

# A CASE IN POINT

***What is the most creative, most innovative social media campaign you've seen this year?***

I thought the Verizon work with Snap to launch their 5G network was excellent. The depth of the lens experience couldn't exist without 5G and it fit well with the cultural moment. It didn't feel like an overreach either which was probably important in a category with its fair share of negative sentiment. Lots of first here too: the first 5G Landmarker Lens, the first full song to be used in a Lens and the first 3D Bitmoji music performance.

LET'S GET SOCIAL  
**LET'S GET SOCIAL**  
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