

2021 TREND REPORT

In collaboration with **ROOTS PR & DEX VENTURES**

For informational purposes only. References are provided for illustrative intent based on current market observations by the consultancy. If you would like to use any mentions or commentaries in this report, please credit and link it back to our website www.rootsasia.com & www.dexventures.com

INTRODUCTION

At **REX** (ROOTS & DEX), we aim to bring our observations of the year to be shared with our fellow marketers in hope that we can collectively contribute candid views of where we believe the marketing road is headed for the following year.

These insights were supplied by our field experts across Communications, Digital and Experience practices and serve as an annotation of our continuous effort towards deepening our understanding in this ever-changing and exciting domain.

We hope that you will find this report useful in your marketing journey this year.

2021

Marketing Trends

Impact of 1

Digital

Social

Communications

Experience

Impact of 1

Opportunities in a Volatile Year

Due to Covid-19, businesses had to re-calibrate plans in light of acute market shifts. Some were more agile than others as companies aggressively modify marketing and sales strategies to reach consumers through new platforms.

Businesses that have made significant investments into transforming their business pre-covid now reap the benefits primarily in online retail. Those highly impacted were those that ignored the shift to digital and bore the brunt of having low online footprint.

With this as a background, we anticipate gradual recovery in H1 of 2021 with more robust activity in H2 as Covid cases start tapering off, supported by improved sentiment in retail, hospitality and ultimately travel.

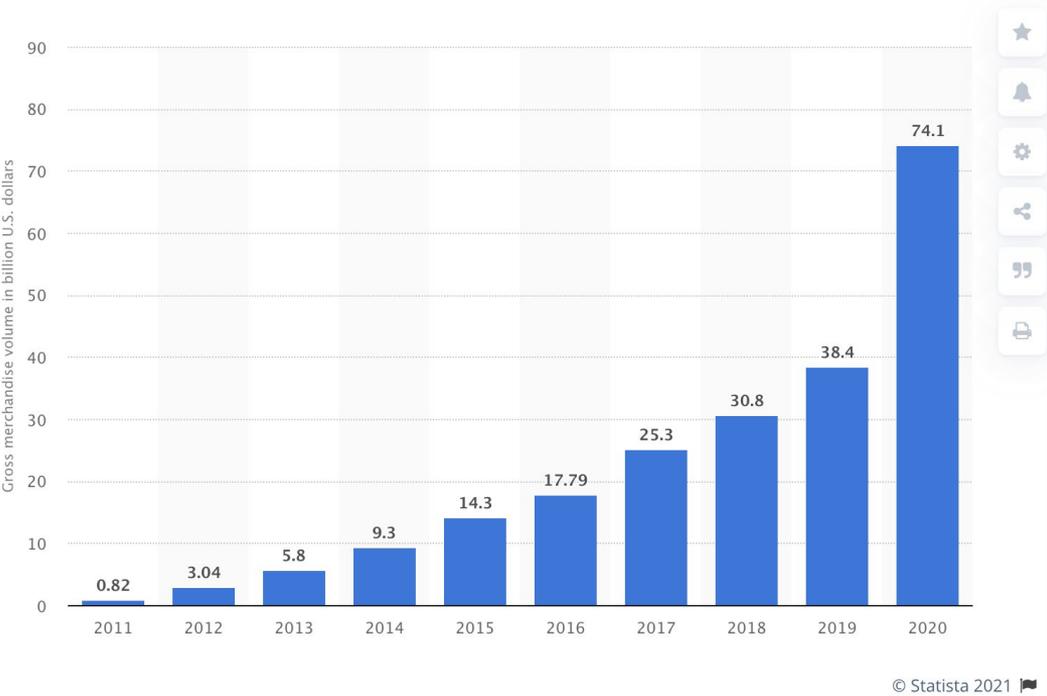


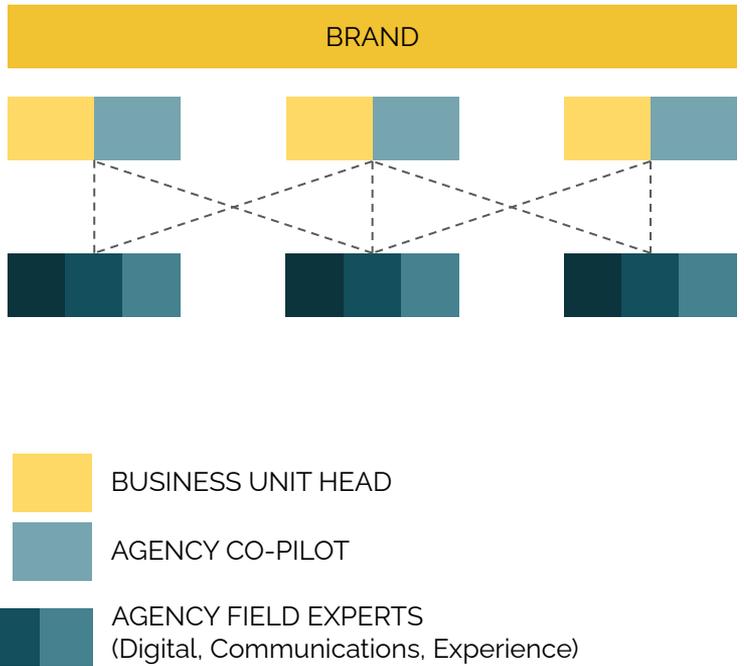
Image: Alibaba Singles' Day GMV. Shopping festivals like Singles' Day give retailers a booster shot during the pandemic

Framework for Omni-Channel Working Teams

For brands who are doubling-down on integrated marketing, a critical but often-times overlooked part of the process is the framework between working teams. A structured operating workflow is essential to pull each moving part together across field experts to effectively deliver results.

Teams will be built around the business unit needs and serve as co-pilots to the brand leaders. This enables the agency to provide relevant expertise to each working unit.

Success is therefore a matter of synergistic strength built upon regular meeting cadences, aligned marketing objectives, KPIs and goals through bi-directional feedback.

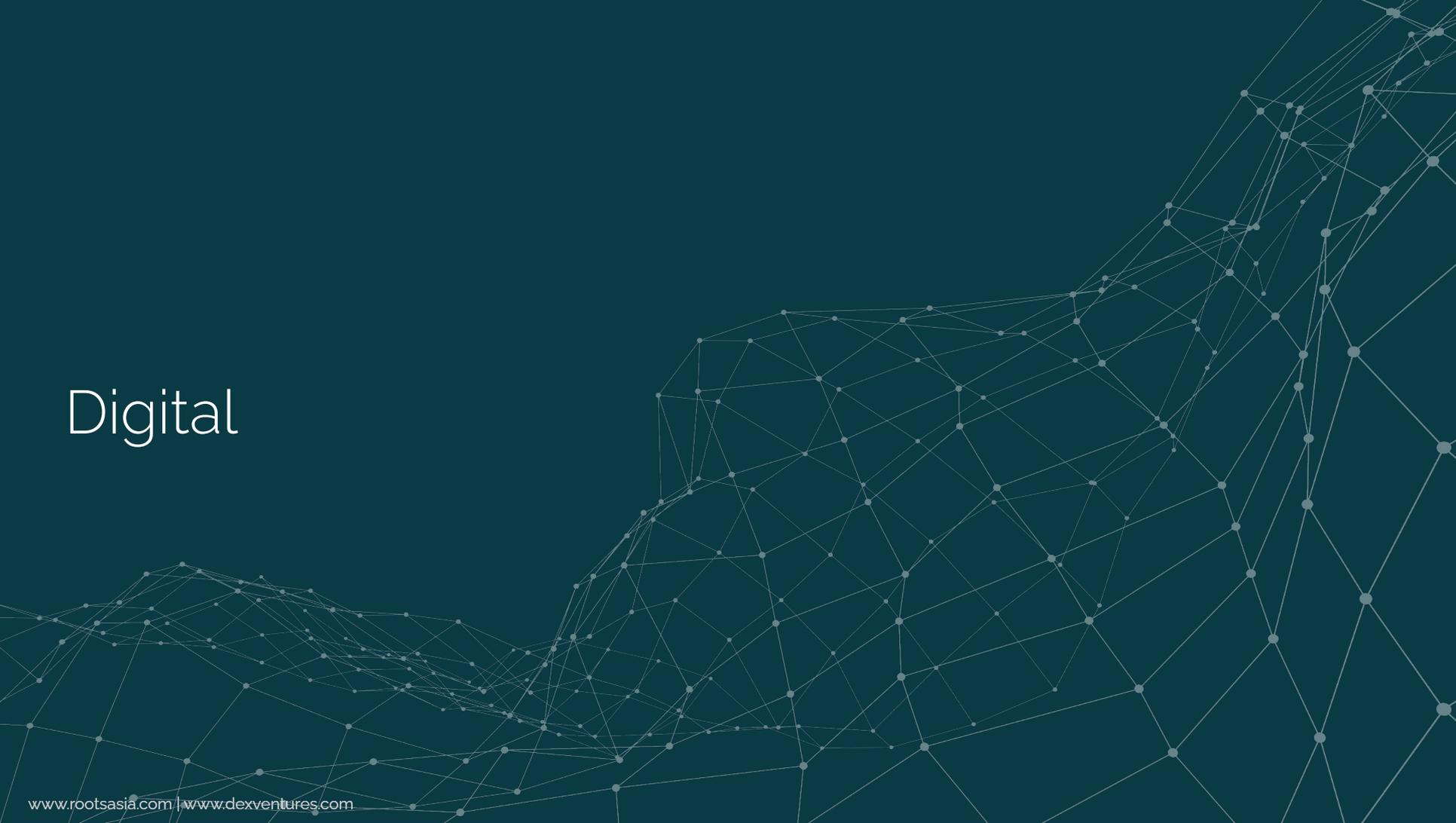


Finding Balance in an Omni-Channel Environment

The main goal is not only to reach, but to convert potentials into customers. Choosing the right channel with the right allocation of focus will help increase the efficacy of each channel.

For retail brands, strike a balance between online and offline communications and weave the entire brand experience throughout the consumer journey.



A network diagram consisting of numerous small, light-colored circular nodes connected by thin, light-colored lines. The nodes are arranged in a way that suggests a complex, interconnected system, possibly representing a digital network or data flow. The background is a solid dark teal color.

Digital

The Changing Face of E-Commerce

Most businesses agree that e-commerce is important but lack the commitment towards developing the right infrastructure. As part of transformation, traditional brick and mortar businesses should be allocating at least 10% to 15% of their store expansion budget into developing a strong e-commerce footprint. These channels not only enable sales but provide a wealth of data that will enrich marketing and sales strategies long into the future.

While third party e-commerce platforms are important sales channels, emphasis needs to be given to the brand's website as the hub. This ongoing endeavour requires immense commitment in the areas of security, logistics, marketing, advertising and data applications.



E-Commerce viewed as an ecosystem rather than isolated sales platforms

Automated Journeys and Data Consciousness

Data has been placed into a spotlight. We know that every transaction and action online can be tracked and these data sets provide brands with a wealth of information for better understanding of consumer behaviour and habits. This information is crucial in planning for campaigns and next actions.

B2B businesses who have predominantly used online to gather leads were not as affected as they already understood the basics of using data to optimise results.

Whereas B2C businesses hold an immense pool of data that has yet to be tapped. We believe this could be due to "Overchoice" Syndrome - too many options of solutions, leading to indecisions in their transformation journey. If done right, the potential of these data points can produce multiple folds of returns.



Data and KPIs

First Party Data

Consumer companies are relying too heavily on platforms to reach customers without considering ownership of first-party data. As a result, these companies will ultimately pay a "toll fee" for each sale because they are essentially "renting" customers from these platforms. While many talk about big data, it all starts with developing a good infrastructure for data management.

Funnelling

Be very clear with your own customer funnel and what you expect from each stage of the funnel. Once that is done, develop key indicators to track results and ROI from each stage. Otherwise, brands will not be able to successfully attribute success and will continue to pour millions of dollars through a shotgun strategy.

Determine SMART Indicators with Agencies

Plan, execute and review short term and long term goals with your agency. Results in a dynamic environment require continuous improvements as the basis of client-agency relationships, not absolutes. It is impossible achieve certainty but an aligned way of work will increase the probability of success.



Lead Gen

Inbound marketing
Campaigns

Lead Nurturing

Content marketing
Re-engagement programs
Drip programs

Illustration: B2B framework for marketing to sales funnel. Most B2C brands focus on top funnel due to lack of strong customer data management framework.

Applications for Marketing

EMAIL MARKETING

Emails have always been considered as "old tech", however the resurgence and importance of it today is greatly misunderstood as they are key to reaching the doorsteps of the end-users and still serve as a trusted medium of communication.

[CAMPAIGN MONITOR](#) | [GET RESPONSE](#)

CONNECTIVITY

As more marketers start building their technology stack, the ability to connect each application within the stack will drive further utility of APIs for data integration and 2-way interactions between these applications.

MARKETING AUTOMATION

Applications with automations and journey builders enable content and message personalisation at scale while gathering behavioural insights for enhanced ad retargeting.

[ELOQUA](#) | [PARDOT](#) | [HUBSPOT](#)

SOCIAL MARKETING

Social media specialists need to orchestrate content, community and response across myriad of social channels. Here are some notable options that are currently leading in this space:

[SPRINKLR](#) | [HOOTSUITE](#) | [SPROUT SOCIAL](#)

GetResponse (Email)

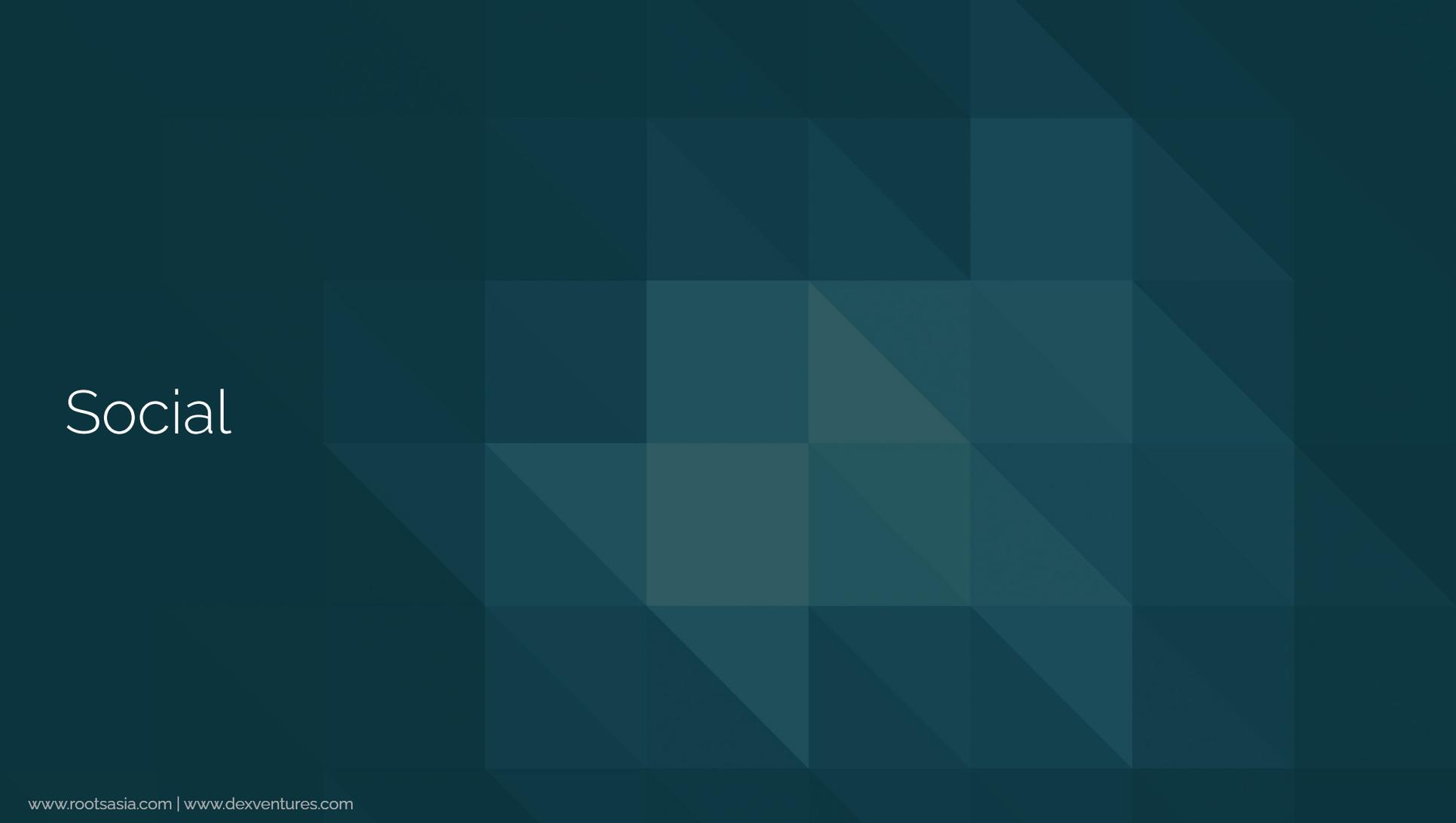
Shopify (ECommerce)

Growwave (Loyalty)

GA (Analytics)

Lotame (Data)

Sample Stack



Social

Social Media's Coming of Age

With myriad of social platforms today, consumers have now started compartmentalising their social behaviours. Brands will need to home in on key social platforms instead of relying on Facebook and Instagram as the only mainstays of social tactics.

Social marketing will become more challenging as users prefer to engage on topics in a specialised platform instead of Facebook and Instagram - which are more for social sharing instead of high value interactions.

For 2021, the **community manager's role** will be important as the voice and front-desk of the business by managing conversations and service-level.

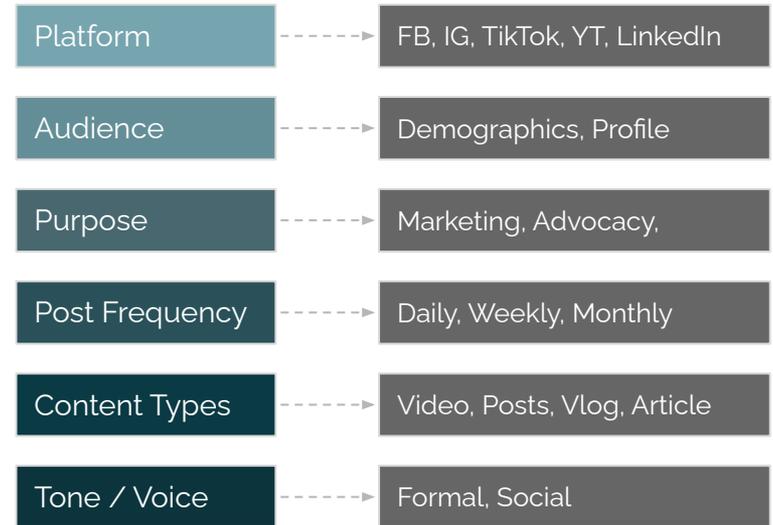
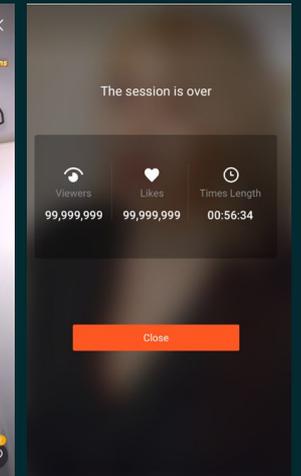


Illustration: Social framework for targeted tactics. We encourage to curate content to suit the platform.

Influencers for Social Selling

Campaigns that combine the power of influencers to front brand sponsored e-commerce sales on platforms like Lazada and Shopee will grow in 2021. We believe there will be more expansive and creative sales collaborations with influencers in live shoppertainment especially during shopping festivals - **10.10**, **11.11**, **12.12** and **Black Friday** to name a few.



A Hotbed for Local Creators

There will be a rise in collaborations with creators to produce engaging content that enables brands to take a much more localised tone to the way they communicate. This is attributed to an increase in appreciation for locally developed content due to a few factors:

1. Consumers want to be part locally initiated movements
2. Communities who want to feel that brands are supporting the growth of local initiatives *i.e. arts, music, fitness, food*
3. Localisation hits closer to home in terms of aspirational values

Localised branded content will cement its place in the marketing mix in the years to come as discerning local consumers demand greater exclusivity.



Social Commerce

It's no secret that social media is now a critical platform for online marketing. With the introduction of Facebook Shops, Instagram shops, and Pinterest Shopping Ads and Catalogs, social commerce is set to become a core e-commerce pillar in most businesses.

With 55% of online shoppers now making purchases through social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram or Pinterest, and 71% of consumers turning to social media for shopping inspiration, it is now more important than ever to make your brand, products and services shoppable on social media – especially as more businesses transition to digital to adjust to the COVID-19 crisis.

For example, the use of e-payment (or e-wallets), setting up online shops on top of brick-and-mortar stores, etc. With that in mind, businesses which set their market approach as a solutions provider that help empower their clients to stay relevant to the current market, will certainly be able to stand out as an industry leader for foreseeable years.



Supplementary Read: [How to Navigate Marketing in 2021? by Communicate in association with AdAge](#)

Supporting & Enabling Conversations

Thoughts and opinions are now exchanged at scale and more frequently in specialised apps or platforms. This provides immense opportunities for business leaders or subject matter experts to share views and interact directly with their audience on current topics.

The forward-thinking leaders will take advantage of these channels to speak directly to their audience with the intent of driving conversations around their vision of business and the industry.

 Groups

1.8 billion groups

 reddit

330 million users

Quora

300 million users

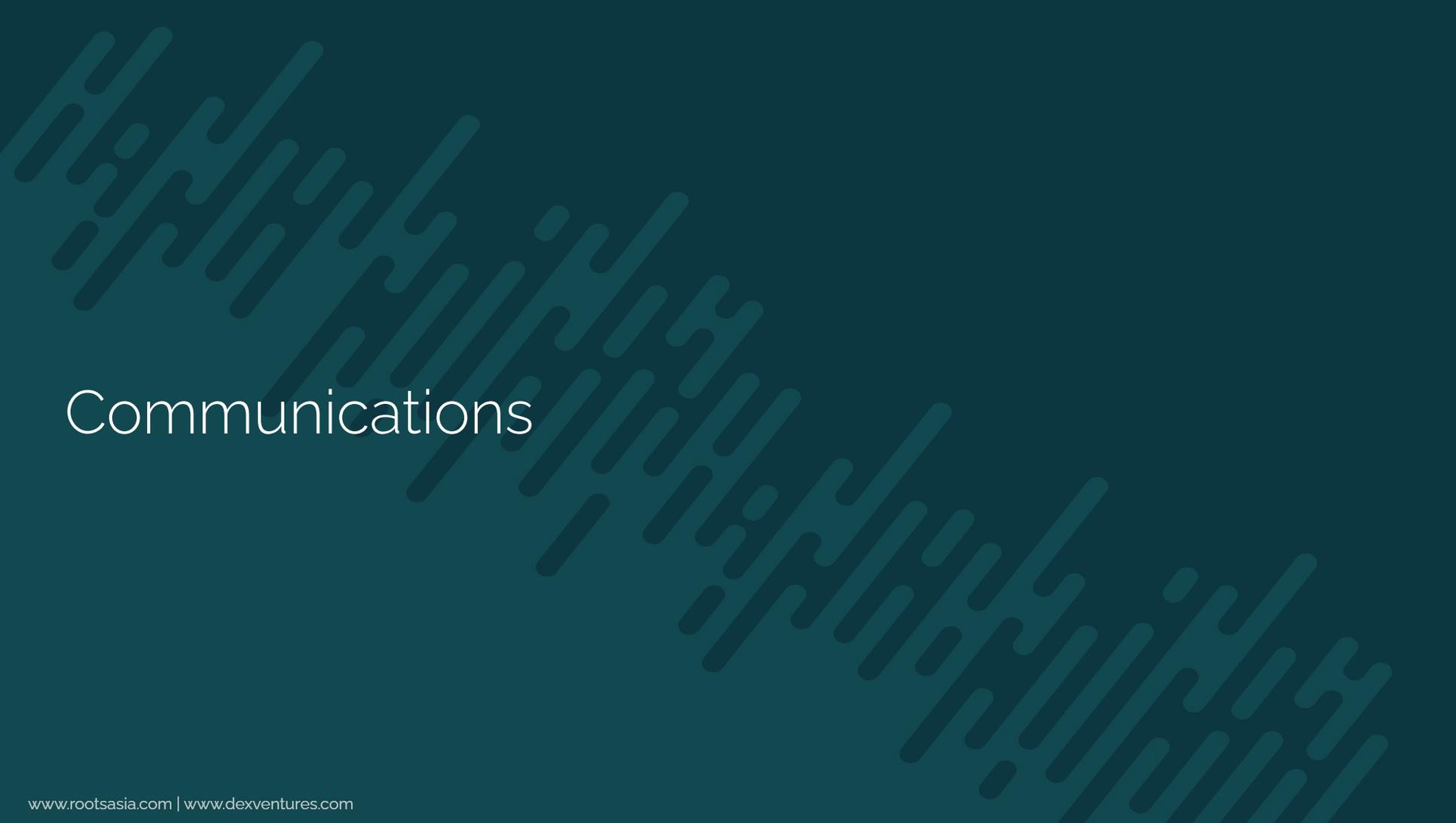
meetup

50 million members

Community platforms are proving to be hotbeds for common topical discussions and idea sharing.

Watch out for ...





Communications

B2B with B2C Communications

Consumers look for brands that give value and purpose to them, and the way brands communicate should reflect that, instead of going heavy on promotions and deals. Essentially, a holistic delivery of key messages through the lenses of both lifestyle and business channels allow a wider reach to all audiences.

Dialling up on human connection allows brands to resonate better according to trends, especially when the outlook is unpredictable. Listening to the sentiments of consumers closely and identifying the gaps that brands can fill and enhance – ergo bring value to them.

Being Part of the Lifestyle

During the pandemic, social media usage has increased tremendously such as Instagram, Tik Tok, LinkedIn. With the introduction of Instagram shop, brands are seizing the moment to be aggressive in upping the ante to be prominent within the platform. Leveraging on KOLs help amplify awareness, whilst forging human connection.



BUSINESS IMAGING SOLUTIONS (BIS) Ramps Up Business Solutions Offering to Uplift MSMEs' Efficiency Via Therefore™ And UniFLOW Online



CANON Marketing Malaysia aims to create new businesses and grow through the diversification and lateral expansion of its existing operations into two segments – business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C). President and chief executive officer Andrew Koh said the company understands and embraces the challenge of new growth through a strategic transformation to B2B and B2C.

Since the start of 2020, ROOTS PR built Canon's brand credibility by penetrating both B2B and B2C segments and emphasising on its thought leaders in business solutions and lifestyle applications.

Communication Technologies

Social Engagement

Brands are growing more aware on the changing trends following the global pandemic shift. This has lead to a production of user-generated content remixes to recreate the brand's identity on emerging social platforms such as TikTok.

Moving forward, there will be more opportunities for brands to co-produce content, providing consumers with templates to base their contents off. This will ensure organic connection between brands and consumers, driving credibility and consumer believe towards the brand.

Influencer Tracking

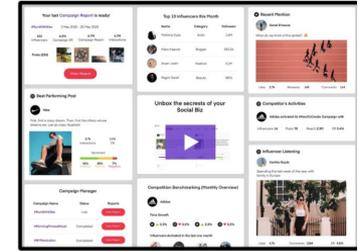
The importance of social media as a platform of news is now at its peak, with lockdowns driving people to these sites for quick and bite-sized news. As influencer marketing gives traditional media a run for its money, we are constantly on the lookout for tools that will allow us to gauge an influencer's credibility and effectiveness in a certain campaign / brand. Tools that can automate and house influencer data on a mass scale would allow for easy extraction and reporting.



Smarter Social Data for Smarter Business

Empower your social media with meaningful data-based decisions only with Unbox Social.

Enter your email ID



Hootsuite Platform Plans Resources

Log In

See it first

Look beyond what's trending today. Build social intelligence into your strategy so you know with confidence when to stay the course—and when to flip the script.

Insights

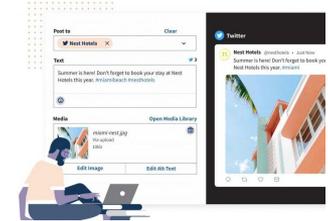
Spot, track, and analyze trends and sentiment in real time

Streams

Monitor and engage at scale across all your social channels

Brand Protection

Manage security, automate compliance, and mitigate digital risk



Tracking Reach For Better Campaign Reporting

Leveraging on tracking tools such as [Unbox Social](#) and [Sprout Social](#) on a campaign's audience reach will provide a better understanding on how brands can strategise with these social platforms.

Shared Vision Through Community Advocacy

As brands compete to gain share of attention, one has to wonder, "What is the most effective way to create mass?" How do we then identify the right social media influencer to subsequently affect the behaviour of the target audience. Today's consumers are no longer just consumers; they're co-creators. Having shift from a passive role of an audience to being active members of a community. Their desire to be part of something meaningful dictates their level of engagement with a company. If a consumer is able to resonate with a company's values; they are most likely to support the company.



John Walker & Sons XR21 The Legacy Collection Launch to support the preservation of Malaysian Chinese cultures and traditions.



LENOVO social influencer engagements provides a channel for the brand to connect with its consumers.



adidas builds on top of consumers' shared passion for sports and an active lifestyle through ARKL and women's training sessions.

Building Trust through Bold Engagements

Land Transport Authority – We Keep Your World Moving about 9 months ago

Together with about 30 iconic landmarks in Singapore, we will be lighting up five of our bridges in support of Singapore's #SeeltBlue campaign. Inspired by the #MakeItBlue movement in the UK, #SeeltBlue seeks to raise awareness of mental health issues during this period when staying home is key. It also serves as a display of solidarity and appreciation to all workers who have been at the forefront of the global battle against COVID-19. #TogetherWeCanOvercome

Since the... See More

<p># SeeltBlue HELIX BRIDGE</p>	<p># SeeltBlue ELGIN BRIDGE</p>
<p># SeeltBlue CAVENAGH BRIDGE</p>	<p>COLEMAN BRIDGE +2 # SeeltBlue</p>

Little red dot turns blue as iconic landmarks in Singapore light up for #SeeltBlue campaign

Marina Bay Sands launches new nightly light show in support of #SGUnited

Image: #SeeltBlue & #SGUnited community shoutouts on rallying citizens back on their feet saw numerous brands & business participate
Source: [NST](#) / [TimeOut](#)

The pandemic has shown us that fostering human connection is essential when re-building brand health.

This has put a premium on the value of alliances, people and communities. Perhaps it is time for organisations to re-evaluate purpose and strategies; to exercise greater responsibility towards stakeholder and community needs.

Campaigns for Different Touchpoints

Producing local content

As much as Global contents carry a weight in creating attraction, consumers these days are also looking at localised content and skewing more towards local artisanal brands. Producing local content not only shows a brand's commitment to the community it operates in but also promotes inclusivity for people to feel closer to brands.

Partnerships for a wider reach

With the downsizing of publications, the impact of reaching a target audience is seemingly smaller. Through partnerships with other brands / media houses, common objectives can be met while tapping into uncharted territory to reach new and potential customers.

OBERLO Brands and Influencers Are Embracing TikTok

MORE
brands and influencers will start using TikTok as a marketing platform in 2021.
(Tribe Dynamics, 2020)



OBERLO TikTok Trends: Focus on Social Commerce



Social commerce will become increasingly **POPULAR** following TikTok and Shopify's partnership.
(TechCrunch, 2020)

OBERLO Branded Hashtag Challenges

Given how effective it's been in boosting brand awareness, branded hashtag challenges will continue to be one of the **BIGGEST** TikTok trends in 2021.
(TikTok, 2020)



OBERLO Remixing Is the New User-Generated Content



Thanks to TikTok's powerful built-in editing features and tools, more and more users will be **REMIKING** their TikTok content.
(Talkwalker, 2020)

Source images by [Oberlo](#)

Experience

Seamless Experiences through Online X Offline Touchpoints



Image: While predominantly popular with micro-businesses, live-streamed videos and events are picking up pace as part of social content and engagement tactic.

Brands had to step out of their comfort zone to creatively new find ways to resume interactions with their audience. This has accelerated effort towards new ways of doing business and created a strong push towards real-time engagements through different touchpoints.

Winners are those who can adapt quickly and develop new ideas and business streams faster than the rest to recapture market share.

Hybrid Events In the Post-Pandemic World

2020 was the year we saw brands shifting their focus towards digitalising their events. Book Sale giant, [Big Bad Wolf Books](#) turned their mass physical sale to online and went full digital during pandemic. This allowed the brand to reach out to a wider audience of Malaysians i.e. those in out of reach states such as East Malaysia to promote and instill reading among non-readers.



Brand to Home Experiences



adidas Malaysia also activated "Athletes on the Move" - a line-up of suspended running mannequins at Pavilion KL, where consumers can activate an Augmented Reality journey of "Athletes" running upwards, heading towards the new adidas Brand Centre.

To build strong brand resonance, businesses need to enable 2-way interactions with their customers. Their purchase decisions are better formed when able to interact directly with the brand during launches, festivities, and also workshops.

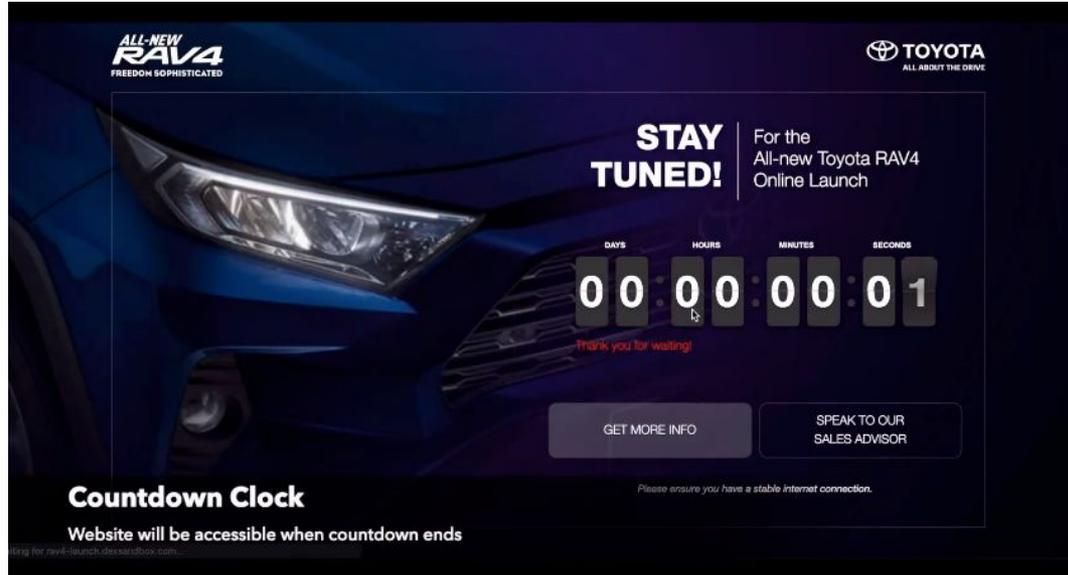


Image: Introducing SL20 Live on adidas Runners KL. Live streaming micro-events for social engagements with subject matter experts.

Virtual is the New Reality

While virtual events started off as a necessity in 2020, it has proven to be here to stay. By going virtual, brands are opening their events to an entirely new audience due to easier accessibility and wider reach.

We anticipate that the future will comprise of a showcase physical event complemented by virtual components and programs that enable the event to be telecasted across geographies reaching more participants.



Toyota Launch. Within the same day of the launch, over 1,000 registered visitors visited product microsite to view the launch and the showroom. [Watch the Video](#)

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