



SOCIAL TRENDS 2020



In the fast-spinning world of social, sitting still isn't an option. Some trends burn bright - then quickly fade away. Others go the distance, changing how we connect and communicate for the better. What opportunities will come your way in 2020?



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WELCOME

Like 2018, 2019 has seen Instagram lead the way among brand marketers and influencers alike, setting trends and helping brands deliver perfectly polished content to new audiences and well-nurtured communities.

TikTok has had a big year, taking the hard-to-crack Gen Z market by storm by encouraging creativity and giving virtually anyone the chance to go viral. With ethics and responsibility front-of-mind, we've also seen key platforms reconsider their policies and make baby steps towards effecting change for the better.

So, what does the future hold for social media? We've had the whirlwind romance, and it seems we've now hit a bit of a rocky patch. As 'followers' cry content overload and take a step back, brand marketers need to go back to basics, working hard to rekindle the joy that made their fans follow them on social in the first place. From interruption to entertainment, we think we can expect to see some major changes in social over the next twelve months. Let's take a closer look at what 2020 has to offer...

THE VALUE OF SOCIAL

The way we use social needs to change

On the one hand, social media is a time drag – distracting us from what we should be doing and encouraging procrastination via mindless scrolling. Looking at our weekly screen time in shock, we're unlikely to see any significant value from the time we invest in social. Worse still, we're being habitually battered with offensive, immoral or toxic content.

On the other hand, there are people and profiles out there just itching to add value to our personal and professional lives. In 2020, we're likely to see increasing numbers of people spring cleaning their social, choosing to exclusively follow the people and brands that add value and positivity to their life. This should be a key focus for anyone wishing to stay competitive on social...

Obviously this is an incredibly sensitive subject – for us, as well as many brand marketers who must see this social movement as a signal to create content that is both relevant and useful. There is already way too much superfluous (and questionable) content out there that has been created almost for the sake of it. If it doesn't mirror your customers' online behaviours, habits and values, it's not worth creating. We're looking forward to seeing how this shift in brand thinking plays out...



PIVOT TO PRIVACY

Helps to create more 'shareable' brand content

Private messaging, ephemeral 'disappearing' content and small group chats are by far the fastest-growing areas of online communication. It seems users feel more comfortable being themselves in these spaces, corresponding with growing anxiety around sharing anything permanently.

Our personal struggles and worries about how social networks treat our personal data has been well documented in the past year; undoubtedly heightened by the political landscape in the UK. With mounting pressure from the public and governing bodies, each platform is revising its own privacy policy and trying to show that it takes the threats associated with data seriously. As a result, 2020 will see brands having to work hard to get us to consume their content - and even harder if they want us to change our minds about anything.

We think 2020 will be the year brands sit up and embrace 'dark social'. Brands will need to create more relevant content through a lens of 'shareability'; encouraging captures, bookmarks and good old copy and paste wherever possible. Think about how your content is shared amongst friends or family - as we usher in a new era of fewer interruptions and more entertainment, how can we do better to keep audiences coming back for more?

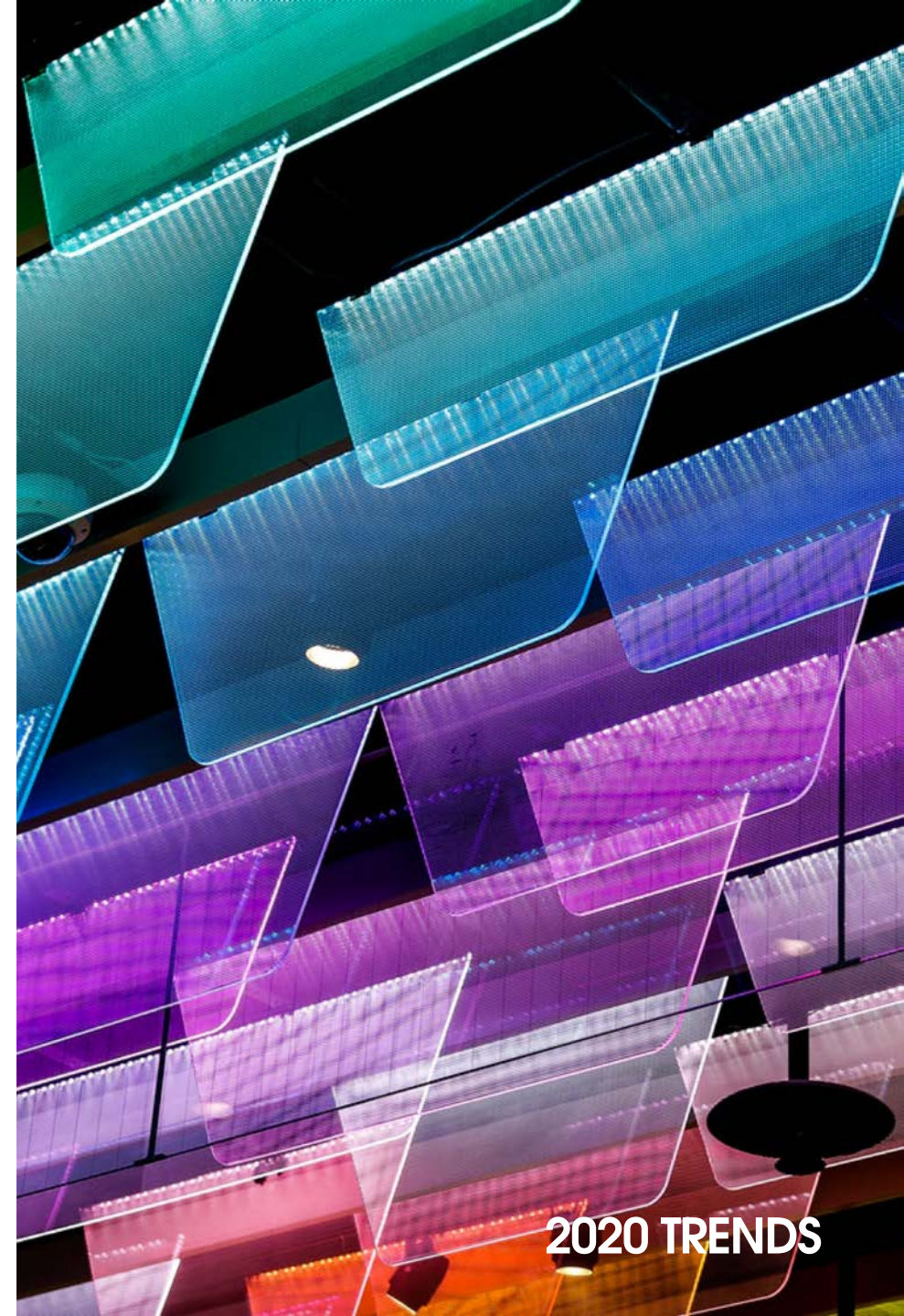
TIKTOK TAKEOVER

TikTok has our attention (for now)

We predicted big things for TikTok in 2019 – and we weren't wrong. This year, the platform has established itself as the leading platform for shortform content, with looping video, karaoke, and a penchant for “weird creativity” all part of what makes the platform so appealing to young audiences.

What makes TikTok unique is that every video has a chance to go viral on its own merit, regardless of how big a following its creator has. This is all thanks to a top-drawer algorithm. TikTok hit a milestone this year; it's more popular than Facebook among 13-16 year olds. The average TikTok user spends roughly “five to six minutes on the app per session” — that's almost double the average amount of time spent on Instagram.

As always, there are some headwinds for brands to navigate, namely the questionable origins of the app and the monetising of child-friendly content. Brands should be buoyed by the fact that TikTok has embraced celebrities like Will Smith and Cardi B. Big advertisers like Nike, ASOS and Walmart are also on board, and there's now talk of a direct shopping tool for users. Whether the army of TikTok Gen Z users wants any of these things, remains to be seen.





EARS TO THE GROUND

Brands turn it up with reactive content at scale

In 2020, brands that can better understand the social and cultural landscape lived by their customers - and combine that deep knowledge with reactive content - will succeed in winning love, PR headlines and customer loyalty.

We predict brands will pour more money into reactive content next year. With Lidl's response to the John Lewis ad and the Wagatha Christie scandal firmly behind us, we'll all be on the lookout for more reactive content opportunities as we move into 2020. The engagement rewards are there for everyone to see, but can brands rise to the challenge of being able to quickly create and convert a concept on the fly?

Being first with a witty piece of copy and creative isn't necessarily a guarantee of success, but in newsworthy situations, every second counts. The sooner your brand can join the party (provided it's in a relevant way), the better.

Look out for the brands that can combine deep social listening (not just a quick skim at some tweets) alongside a more nuanced, personalised, 1-2-1 approach to audience engagement and community management.

FRAUD FIGHTERS

No faking allowed as brands start to fight back

The political climate in the UK has allowed the majority of people to understand, in some capacity, the seriousness of fake news and its little friend – the advertising bot. People may not understand either in any great detail, but they know they exist. This is a problem for social networks and marketers alike.

Social networks are actioning changes to make things easier for advertisers, allowing advertisers to choose how and where their content is shown. This is a great step in the right direction, but savvy marketers now need to be aware of brand safety and advert fraud for their marketing campaigns. About 20% of all sites on the internet are linked to various types of ad fraud. These sites rely on traffic bots that mimic human behavior, the result of which is revenue generated for the advertiser. The fact that there was no potential customer there in the first place is by the by.

The majority of ad fraud on social comes from fake clicks or invalid clicks. It could be a competitor looking to deplete your advertising budget - or click farms designed to drive up the popularity of certain pages and sites. Expect click fraud protection packages to be a hot topic of conversation amongst marketers, and perhaps a service provider or two rising up to help brands prevent fraud on social channels.





GEO-TARGETING

Expect social content for your neighbourhood

Reaching customers near the point-of-purchase decision, or with an advert that's relevant to them in the moment – well, it's the holy grail for social advertisers. With a geo-targeted media strategy, you can increase the frequency and recall of your brand into specific locations, and often for a much cheaper ad buy.

Increasing the ROI of a campaign and being able to understand what different people across the country think of your product is a surefire winner. That's why geo-targeting works. It can also help a brand on an emotional level – perhaps igniting a passion and pride for a place someone lives via a product made there or a connection to the community.

Expect bigger brands to start thinking locally with their advertising, combining their broad, brand-led national campaigns, with much smaller and more tactical direct sales activations locally. Brands that use local adverts will combine local creative with colloquial language to win the day. But, like all forms of advertising, the challenge of geo-targeted campaigns will be sifting the meaningful messages from the spam.

INTERACTIVE VIDEO

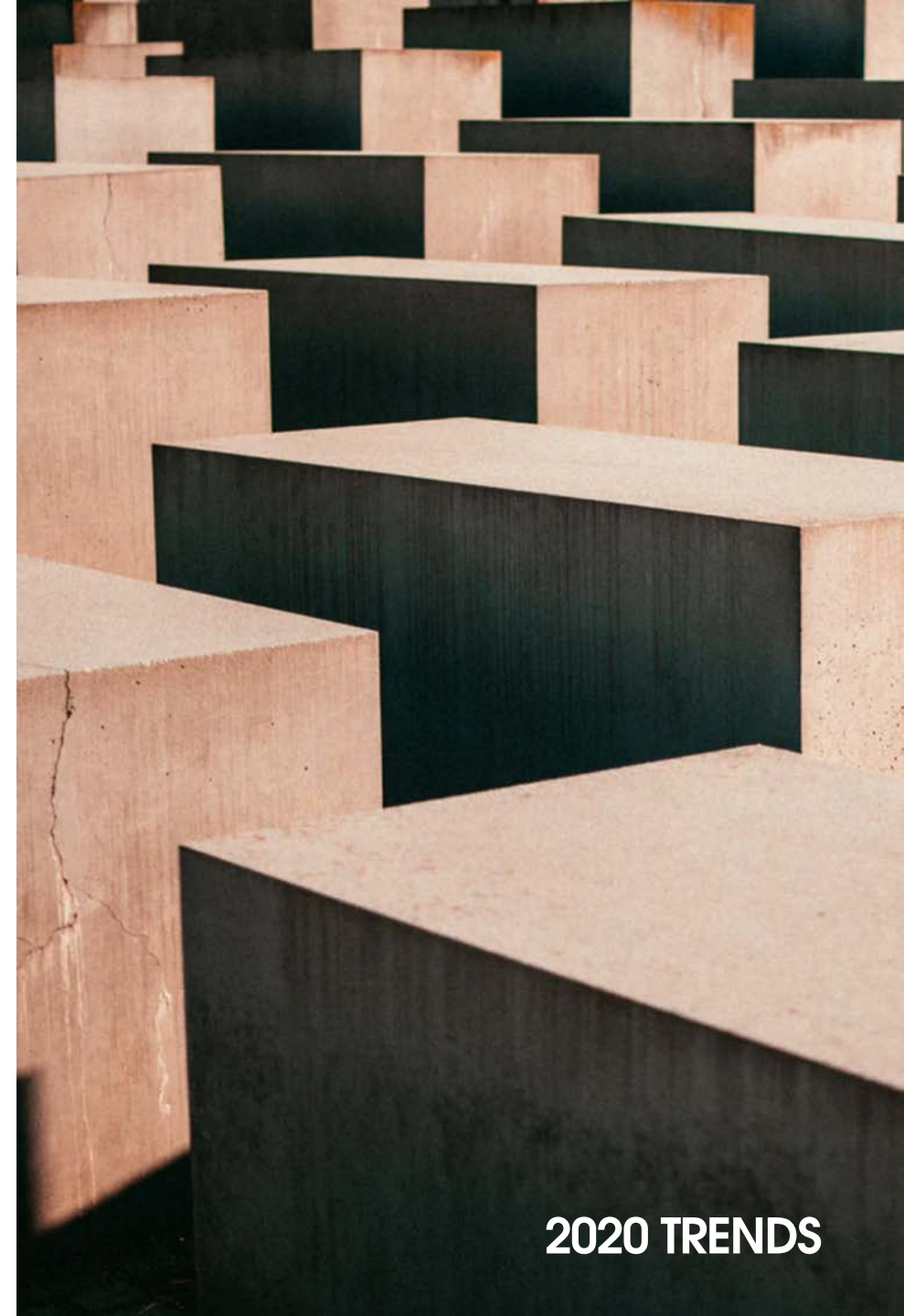
Touch, explore, skip, play

Netflix brought interactive video to the masses with Black Mirror and Bear Grylls. What you might not know is that a technology called WireWax has been leading the charge for brands with interactive video for a number of years now.

There are two real wins for brands. One is narrative branching; basically a storytelling structure that requires viewers to choose between different options to advance the story, each undoubtedly resulting in an alternate ending. It's interactive, engaging, personalised and... fun. The other win is data.

The measurement and data points that fall out of interactive video are pretty compelling, especially given that social commerce is already baked into the tech. 2019 brought social commerce to life. With WireWax technology, you can now layer on shoppable hotspots and slick 'add to cart' functionality – all without skipping the video.

Expect a much more seamless transfer into social channels in the new year, and a slew of brands incorporating interactive video content on-site and in social.





THE SOCIAL CEO

Is coming to fruition in 2020

Meet the Social CEO. The Social CEO inspires their teams and communicates the values and the vision of their company on social media in new and often compelling ways.

Social media has become a part of everyday life for most businesspeople, and video has played a huge part. The inspired Social CEO will use video storytelling to give a true fly-on-the-wall look at their business life, share news about their company, listen to customers' views on products and services, and bring a humanising effect to their brands. But the social CEO isn't someone who 'is comfortable on video' - they are much more than that. Switched-on, insight-driven, dripping with expertise... and likeable.

Look away recruiters, the social CEO will, in turn, add value to their company via employer branding and provide a pathway for talented people to find them (and make their way into the world of work with their company). Companies who embrace the social CEO will be at the front of the queue when the talent comes knocking, enjoying a nice organic uplift of increased followers and engagement on channels like LinkedIn.

OWN THE MOMENT

All rise for social media visual identity

As social media matures, we will start to see a new wave of brands explore their social media visual identity. Lots of social content appears in micro moments, when people are consuming their content quickly. This speaks to system 1 thinking, which compromises intuition and instinct. Specific and detailed social branding can impact on this and help brand recall.

With the explosion of Stories content and the seemingly endless number of people using them, brands now need to stand out on social and bespoke branded 'Stories templates' will be huge next year.

Expect brands that sell other brands' products under one master brand to really invest to stand out in this space, as well as brands who sell some of the same things as their competitors with little difference seen by the end consumer. Social VI will help these brands to differentiate, be remembered and... win!



SOCIAL COMMERCE

Brands to invest in new s-commerce channels

The number of UK businesses selling on social media sites and apps is predicted to double in the next six months, according to research by PayPal. The data backs up what we already know. People are busy and rely on their smartphones now more than ever - and that includes shopping.

Capturing consumers' attention in the very place they go to for inspiration has been the lifeblood of social strategies for years. The ability for customers to go on and purchase with a frictionless experience hasn't been apparent until now. There are currently 8.4 million British consumers shopping via social media. Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat are the most popular channels, presenting brands with a huge opportunity. Security remains key for consumers shopping on social, prompting companies of all sizes to respond with mobile-friendly payment options.

Facebook will build on its fine work from 2019, with Instagram alone adding four invaluable shopping features for customers. We can expect it to emulate WeChat, making payments simpler via crypto-currency Libra and embedding payments into its family of apps for Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Messenger. Forward-thinking brands will have s-commerce high on the agenda, looking at tools, channels, apps and formats that will help them to sell more on social.

PASSIONATE PLACES

Community housing will become a thing for brands

It's a phrase that's often banded about – 'we need to build a community!' But in reality, most brands' marketers are still pushing messages onto their audiences to satisfy themselves – rather than providing a base for likeminded customers.

As ever, it all starts with algorithms – especially those set up to favour personal interactions, not branded content. Brands committed to developing and engaging social communities aligned with people's passion points will see huge benefits. Like forums and websites, the best thing about communities is conversation. Brands do and will frame these communities to help them in their marketing endeavors – perhaps connecting undecided buyers with previous customers or sharing tips, advice and reviews with those looking for research and inspiration.

In creating and harnessing these specific communities, brands are working to add value to the customer. And, like we've suggested previously, customers will come to view the brand as adding real value to their life – be it via entertainment or education. Expect brands to follow the likes of Strava, Xbox and Sephora who have all set up their own community space. Brands that align themselves to communities will win, and perhaps some of their social channels may be closed as part of the process.



MORE PRODUCTION

As viewing time increases, output must improve

Online video is being watched more than ever. The average person is expected to spend 100 minutes each day watching online video in 2020; up 19% from 84 minutes in 2019. That's the equivalent of watching 25 continuous days of video a year. The bad news? People are becoming less engaged when watching social video. But what can brands do?

The clever brands will understand that people will start to expect their social media video to truly look as good, if not better, than film. This is partly inspired by the battle of the streaming services, those who continuously try to win customers by creating better and more engaging shows (based on the feedback from rich data).

Expect lights, cameras and better directors, and an investment in post production expertise that will enhance social video content to new levels. Savvy agencies and brands will pick up clues and triggers in creative styles and shooting angles from Netflix – if their customers are watching it in their downtime, it makes sense to reimagine it for social. Brands that combine this output with their brand content strategy will also stand out. Look out for more brands that encourage viewers to watch episodically (just like Netflix) and remember... social channels are the new TV networks.

WHAT DO YOU MEME?

Social media sass becomes mainstream

Thumb-stopping memes are on the up. A huge and humorous part of internet culture, in 2020 we can expect to see in-house or in-agency staff appointed specifically to create memes, as the race to make the quickest, slickest, most humorous meme content heats up.

Brands lagging behind the curve will utilise meme content more frequently in their social comms and community management – in fact, some brands have been on this for a long time.

Meme distribution will become more nuanced. Clever brands will use influencers, celebrities and meme pages to share memes first, perhaps before the release of a new series or launch in order to push and promote the content via memes to large audiences (whilst remaining authentic).

But brands beware! Your trick of trying to shoehorn too many messages into the conversation won't work with this particular format. The only brand association with a meme should be a link or a swipe up... don't say we didn't warn you.

MADE BY
punch.

Need to supercharge your social media output in 2020?

Get in touch.

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