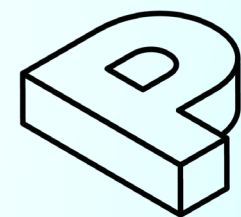


social*hype*

trends report

2023





Time to embrace change?

Welcome along...

So, we're back once again for our 5th Annual Trends Report, and the world of social has evolved and pivoted once again. It already feels like 2023 is going to hit differently. And collectively, we need to be ready. So here it comes...

There are big, career-defining trends like the rapid adoption of AI to wrap our collective heads around. Web3 is not a hot topic, it's now a huge trend. Today, brands are developing strategies and hiring specialist teams to capitalise. Our advice? Don't get left behind, get involved. These two trends alone need SO much headspace. If you've not got all the answers, don't worry, ChatGTP has. Yet in all seriousness, in this rapidly evolving landscape, you will need good advice and strategic planning - it's a must to effect change.

If that's not enough to contend with, there's a bit more on your plate. Your social campaigns have got to start to move people and do things, y'know like drive sales or better still, make your brand famous. You've also got to think about becoming more efficient in what you spend, and more effective in what you create, not to mention the marketing dept as a whole becoming more sustainable.

If it's platform-specific stuff you're dealing with, we've got the lowdown here. We said TikTok would be massive in this very report in 2019 and yes, we were damn right. In 2023 brands will advertise more on TikTok. But... it has to be platform friendly. Focus your production budget on things people search for. TikTok is all about things we're into. This gives you a clue for how to approach the platform - follow your customers' interests. There may be gold in those streets. Tailor your videos around interests. Do the algorithm a solid by giving it more clues. Include captions that include relevant keywords and hashtags, and map to scenarios and interests.

Knock knock? Who's there? It's "the HUGE social growth opportunity for brands in 2023." Oh, just what I've been waiting for... do come in! It's time to get familiar with YouTube Shorts and YouTube... YouTube is a joke (in the good, down with the kids way). 35.6 million people in the UK use it. And YouTube is so much more than a dumping ground for your brand content. Not maximising its potential? More fool you. Working with Creators? You'll need to get serious about Shorts and not just in summer. Their incentives for

talent are now the best, which means creators should gravitate to the platform.

Best of the rest... Reddit and Discord will continue to grow in numbers and use, and brands will need to develop strategies and play nicely in these spaces. LinkedIn will be the key employer brand battleground. And employer brands will see some serious investment. To see success, Employer Brand teams need to match their investment in ads, with investment in bigger social campaigns. And also, don't forget a sizeable chunk of budget for that soon-to-be, all-important, employee sharing incentive.

Creators were hyped like mad in 2022. And will be used more by brands in '23 as they are given better compensation by platforms. And you'll never guess what? Video is still big. Lo-fi, hi-fi, short-form, long-form, authentic, branded. There is an argument that the text-based web is dead. But that's one for another day. And of course, platforms will continue to copy each other's features... stealing the business and functionality of the best apps on the regs, after all, it's just what they do...

If 2022 was about "Community" then 2023 is all about embracing change. Whether you're working with us on fame driving campaigns, exploring AI or Web3 further or investing more in creative output and creative testing, success will depend on your ability to flex and move with the times, so let's not get left behind. It's time to grind... and shine.

Welcome to the Punch SocialHype Trends Report 2023.

Bryn Fowweather
Head of Social at Punch



If you've found value in reading this report, please leave a comment or give it a share to your network. If you've got any questions, hit me up direct via LinkedIn.



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#1

Interest soars in decentralised social

The Good, The Bad and The Buggy

Decentralised social networks. Owned by everyone and no one. Operating on a peer-to-peer model which allows people to create accounts without providing personal information. More control over your data and privacy is a massive tick for 2023.

Additionally, the decentralised ownership structure means that there is a sense of autonomy. You (yes, you!) have the final say on what content goes onto a platform. And there are some significant benefits to getting on board early.

Increased transparency and security. Are those pesky hackers always up in your IG inbox? Be annoyed no more. With decentralised social - data breaches just ain't happening. The data stored on a blockchain is both verifiable and tamper-proof. This provides people with a sense of security and trust. More good news... decentralised social allows people (and brands) to control their own data and monetise it too.

Current social media platforms have a chequered past when it comes to your personal information. They often make people feel like their data is being used without their consent. Moreover, you can't take your data and all your content and easily apply it to another network. Until now...

Yes, decentralised social networks actually allow people to take their data with them across any app on the blockchain. One such decentralised social blockchain, DeSo (Decentralised Social), is a layer 1 blockchain built to power and optimise social media. This blockchain solves the issues of most of today's current blockchains, which are not designed to store and index social content.

Before DeSo, there was a technical breakthrough standing in the way of decentralising social media: the ability to store content cost effectively on a decentralised blockchain. Nobody is going to use a social app that charges you 30p for every like, follow or share. Well, DeSo was the first to bring the cost of decentralised social media down to a competitive level, which was table stakes for moving off of the centralised social media platforms. DeSo is 100% open source, you own your data, it's easy to use - and you get \$DESO coins (currently \$9 right now) when you sign up. What's not to love?

Well, before you get too excited and delete your profiles, there are a few quirks to uncover - and it's worth noting that these platforms are not without their own issues. That said, brands should definitely keep an eye on this area and consider whether a new channel aligns with its vision and mission.

These platforms are relatively new and not all of them may survive in the long run. The user experience is almost as buggy as a Maxi-Cosi warehouse, and the service can be slow. The experience is not as slick or sticky as your current faves TikTok and Instagram... so what's a brand marketer to do?

Let's look at the problems of current platforms through a social media lens. If you're a creator or a brand who makes a living on web2 social media platforms - you rent their audience in exchange for attention. You get restricted reach without advance warning. You risk losing years of hard work if the platform or its users don't like you. A decentralised social network is the only way your efforts would never be in vain.

So, there are undoubtedly so many positives to come from decentralised social networks. We'd encourage you to start researching and exploring the space sooner rather than later.

Key Takeout

For now, this is one to watch and start to plan for.

If you're feeling brave, there is value in being early adopters, putting your brand on the map in a channel and establishing loyalty before competitors catch on.

Feeling cautious? We recommend launching decentra social and treating alternative decentralised platforms as fail-safes: somewhere to cross-post content in case something ever happens to your primary channels, and lucky you, you'll be there for when the explosion of attention comes. Thank us later, yeah?

Decentralisation is everywhere...

Strategist Chris Nee shares his thoughts on decentralised social

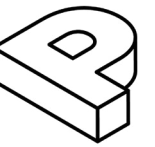
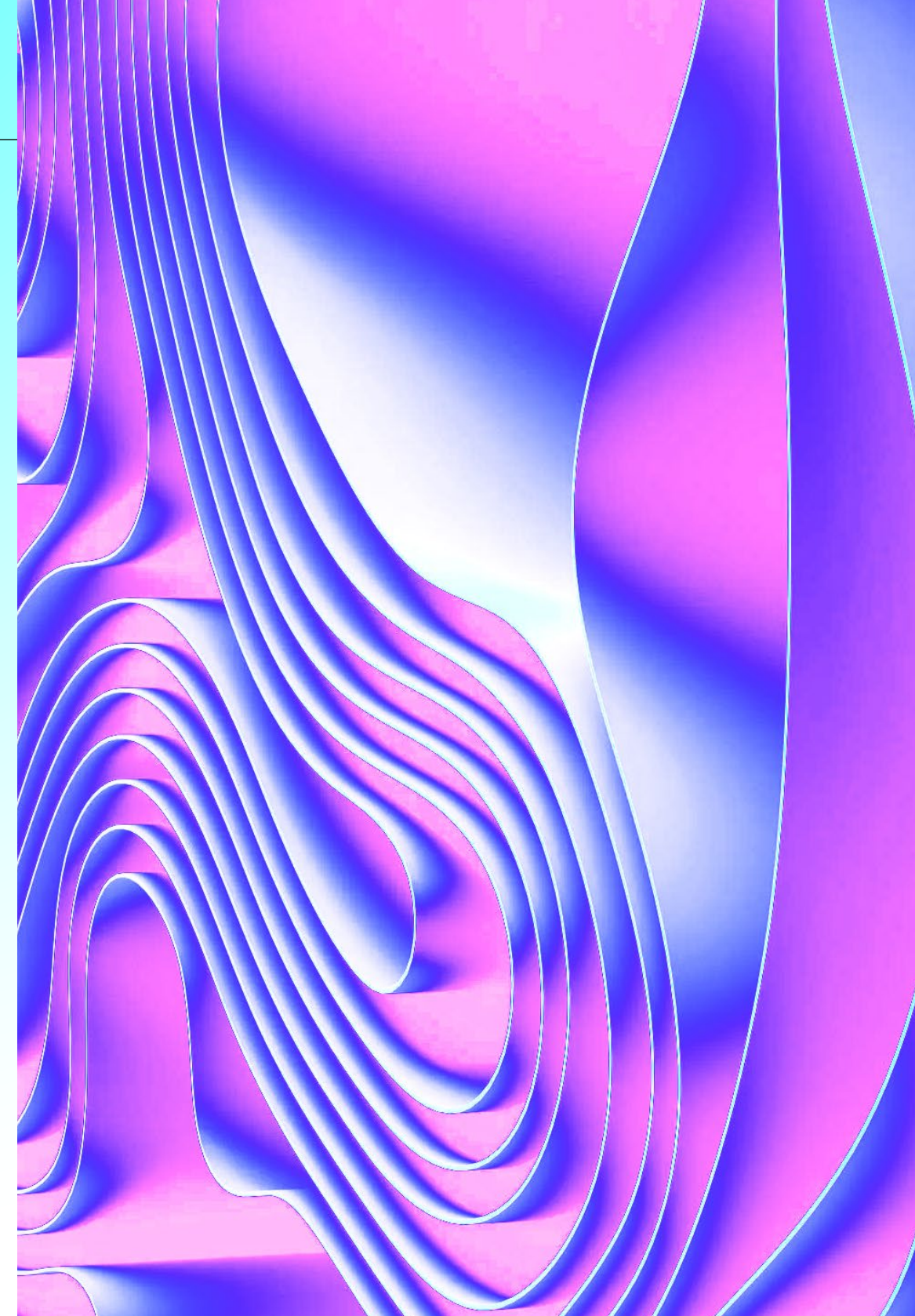
The desire to reorganise power and control away from singular entities to smaller factions and even to individuals is as old as society. It's human nature. Power centres emerge over time but, in the end, humans demand a degree of autonomy.

Web 2.0 era social media platforms attracted us because they connect us by the sheer weight of their popularity. Yet they can isolate as easily as unite and the Big Social experience can be passive, poisonous and unfulfilling. The social giants and the AdTech industry are under scrutiny because of their outsized political potency.

These conditions made some degree of decentralisation inevitable. It might take decades or even never come to full fruition, but surrendering power in exchange for diminishing benefits and worse was bound to generate a reaction. People buy into Web3 because it promises – accurately or not – to put power in their hands. We're moving away from Web 2.0 power centres for the same reason.

Decentralisation is the prevailing direction of travel for social and elsewhere but it's just as important to acknowledge that it's driven by people. By users. In the exploded world of social the power is theirs and they make the rules. Passivity is giving way to consciousness. If brands rely solely on interruptive advertising to reach their audiences, they're in for a shock.

Decentralisation isn't just a trend. It's the future social landscape from which they will spring. People are taking control of their experience and that underpins everything that lies ahead.



Brands beware

As marketers observing social trends and technological developments we have a tendency to jump right into the implications for our brands. "What does it mean for brands?" is our question most asked when things change.

The shift towards these shards of social is different. Big Social's business interests are a good fit for brands: users scroll their feeds because social, brands interrupt those feeds because media. Genuine brand love is vanishingly rare. Brands are tolerated – Web 2.0 social media is a value exchange.

Platforms like Discord and Mastodon fundamentally disrupt that exchange. Servers and instances are community designed spaces and, as their cultural footprint grows, brands will discover that they're not wanted when the decision to accept or not accept advertising, to welcome or not welcome brand participation, is devolved.

But there is an opportunity. Brands with significant cultural cache are already coming out to play. Adidas has an official Discord server with more than 55,000 members. The official servers of Fortnite, Roblox and Minecraft have nearly three million members between them.

The brands obviously control those servers. Make no mistake, they're still built around community, but they're branded spaces. They're the kind of spaces not all brands can populate with such passionate fans.

Crucially, they're purely opt-in. Brands must build their resonance in people's lives and earn, not buy, their attention.

Niche culture is evolving and taking social with it

Culture itself is splintering. Cultural, subcultural and even countercultural membership is being left behind and replaced by a vibrant pick 'n' mix of identity and participation. Empowered by technology, we're embracing our passions and communing online based on our interests.

The social platforms that host these microcultural spaces put power in the hands of the niche communities themselves. Reddit subreddits, Discord servers and Mastodon instances are just a few examples. What they have in common is the ability to create cultural nodes that are made, managed and moderated by the communities.

There's nothing complicated about the user benefits of Small Social. Subreddits, servers, instances and other spaces offer interaction with like-minded people gathered around a self-selected suite of niche interests. It's the perfect way to sculpt our online lives to match what we really think, do and love.

From brochure to blueprint

2023 brings fame driving social campaigns that are impossible to ignore

In today's fast-paced world of social media, the intricacies of platform algorithms and constant feature updates, it is easy for brands to lose their way. Spend more than 5 minutes on Instagram these days and you'll find that many social channels have become more like glossy brochures; filled with adverts and key product information, yet lacking the power to truly captivate audiences.

There is a solution to this problem. Brands can fight back against fickle algorithms by creating iconic fame driving campaigns, that are impossible to ignore. Campaigns and content that help brand awareness is good hygiene. Campaigns and content that create brand fame is good business.

Creating a social-first campaign that resonates with your target audience is not an easy task, but it is worth the effort. It requires a shift in mindset and a reallocation of resources towards campaigns that are thoughtfully planned and executed. It's important to keep these points in mind. Think about PR

value before the campaign kicks off (and yes, social and PR are synonymous). Does the campaign generate positive media coverage? What would a customer, an influencer, a creator, or the press say? What do you want people to think, feel and do? These are all questions you need to answer at the beginning. When you've reached the creation phase, ensure you collaborate, create and iterate content so that it passes the good enough to share/save test. Think big. Really big. Peter Crouch big? No. Burj Khalifa big? Yes.

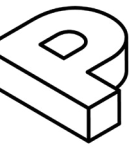
Being the most mentally available brand in your category isn't easy. It means rerouting a chunk of the energy from your team and/or agency into creating intensely thought-out social-first campaigns and brand activations. Distributed in a strategic and compelling way that truly connects with consumers and solidifies you as their 'go-to' choice (check out recent social-first campaigns from Gymshark and KFC for some inspo here). Your social channel shouldn't just be a brochure for your customers; it should be the blueprint that audiences turn to when they want the thing you're providing.

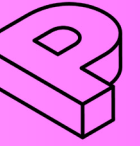


Key Takeout

According to Binet & Field, campaigns focused on achieving brand fame as opposed to brand awareness alone are three times as likely to drive sales, revenues and profits throughout the year and beyond. It is the #1 way to become the 'go-to' choice for consumers – and delight your boss.

Need help thinking bigger this year? Let punch help you with a brand audit and together we can take your social campaigns to the next level.





#4

Web3 enters its 'reputation' era

Brands rush to put strong Web3 strategies in place – although whether or not that includes the Metaverse remains to be seen

Web3 is entering an exciting new phase, where brands are recognising the potential of the blockchain-based web and are eager to implement strong strategies and activations to take advantage of it. For those leading the way, there have already been big investments in teams, digital products and services that are useful and important - many centred around community (a huge trend we called out in 2022). This new iteration of the internet allows for more control and financial stake for users and includes technologies such as cryptocurrencies, NFTs, DAOs, POAPs and decentralised finance.

Until recently, Web3 may have been viewed as a costly and complex novelty. The association with crypto and tech alone was enough to put off many looking initially from afar. However, with the success (and subsequent drop off) of marketplaces like NFTs, which generated a \$41 billion market in 2022, and an increasing focus on values such as sustainability, community, and ease of use, brands are seeing the potential in Web3.

This year we can expect to see more brands experimenting and being brave, following the lead of household names. We've seen coffee giants like Starbucks, sportswear companies like Nike and Adidas, and streaming giants like Netflix and Spotify all develop their Web3 presence recently. Even though the Metaverse does not technically exist yet, with a potential market of \$800 billion, we can expect to see even more brands getting involved in metaverse-shaped initiatives in the coming months. Although, most of the cooler things will be happening in computer games.

Starbucks is a great example of a brand that is already realising the potential of Web3, via Starbucks Odyssey. Starbucks Rewards members can purchase and trade limited edition NFTs / badges and unlock new benefits and experiences. And don't worry, you don't need any crypto to pay for your Pumpkin Spice Latte. We'll see more brands progress with Web3 in this way throughout 2023, showing that it can be used in practical and user-friendly ways. One trend you'll notice is brand marketers applying more and more behavioural science principles, whilst re-imagining social tactics from years gone by. Anyone for a surprise & delight? Go on then...

Sports giants like Nike and Adidas, typically, have led the way and are also starting to explore the evolving possibilities of Web3, building in-house teams of Web3 specialists and experimenting with innovations around digital wearables and NFTs. Streaming giants Netflix and Spotify are also revamping their strategies to include Web3 in the quest to rule the realms of original content. Warner and Disney have also been spotted investing in this new territory, which is a sign of interesting things to come.

As conversations around Web3 continue to grow, it's important for brands to start thinking strategically about how to take advantage of this exciting trend. By understanding smart contract technology and the power of community engagement, brands can position themselves to succeed in this new digital ecosystem.



Key Takeout

As conversations around Web3 continue to grow and evolve in 2023, brands should begin to apply strategic thinking to fully understand this exciting, still-emerging trend.

Take the time in Q1 to explore the best inroads into this new digital ecosystem and its many quirks and nuances. Decentralised brand strategy is a huge topic of conversation and brands and brand marketers have to be prepared for the goalposts to move significantly in terms of our ability to control the message in real time.

Punch invested heavily in this space throughout 2022, with dedicated teams now in place for 2023 and beyond. If you're interested in evolving your understanding of Web3, we're here to help.

If you don't know the difference between Alts and Apes or how to identify your Crypto whales from your pump and dumpers, don't worry...We Are All Gonna Make It.

#5

Content with benefits

Build your perfect creative testing framework

Good creative has always played a big part in how we connect with customers on social. But in the last decade, brand advertisers in social media have been guilty of not focussing enough on paid creative output. Instead, relying too much on tools and data. The key to success was dividing your audiences into segmented groups and using targeting to get conversions. In 2023, creativity has taken on new importance. A consequence of privacy initiatives from Apple (and the European Cookie Directive) has meant a shift of focus.

This year a stringent framework for creative testing should be the cornerstone of your paid social strategy. We all know that creative has to be authentic or slick, or a combination of both. But it also has to be efficient and intelligent in helping you reach your goals.

As a social-first creative agency, this is how we create content with our clients every day. With an in-house studio team and expertise in distribution, we have a holistic view of the process. There are countless things that can enhance how people interact with your paid content. From UGC video reviews to quotes and third-party coverage, instead of making creative changes piecemeal and reactively, you need the plan to benefit your team, and help your brand to make money.

A creative testing framework enables you to analyse the current performance of advertising creative, with a roadmap or testing framework that allows you to keep on iterating content as part of a continuous process, taking actionable insight from the current live ads and formulating new creatives to help improve CTRs and manage creative fatigue. Meta reports that 56% of a brand's sales lift is due to the quality of ad creative, and this has likely only become more significant as targeting has become more challenging - it's an area worth investing in.

Being fastidious with your testing will allow you to identify what actually resonates with your audience by comparing different combinations of elements and seeing what performs best, and where. There are subtle differences between split testing and A/B testing, so it's important that brand and marketing teams collaborate with social experts to land on the approach that will work best for the business. In the right hands, it cannot help but spark exciting new ideas.

Taking a look from a brand perspective also makes sense. It is important for content to tell your brand story and showcase your distinctive brand assets. Not only does good creative improve click-through rates, but Meta's ad auction prefers good creative, reducing the advertising auction cost and lowering CPM.

The beauty of creative testing is that it doesn't just help you land your message in the best way today. It is a constant teacher that, over time, will help you define the look, feel and purpose of your brand in a way that will help cement you as the most coherent, natural, blueprint brand in customers' minds.

Key Takeout

Ultimately, creative is THE most influential aspect that connects who you are, what you do and why you do it, with your target audience. It's key at every stage, whether it's awareness, consideration or nudging sales - storytelling or documenting, changing perceptions or driving change.

It's already happening, but 2023 will see an even bigger emphasis put on testing and the continual evolution of creative approach. Embrace ongoing experimentation, take more creative risks and always be open to learning as much from the good as the bad - or risk leaving money on the table.



#6

Artificial intelligence

Key Takeout

We're big fans of AI, fascinated with the possibilities of how quickly it is evolving and the opportunities it presents, whether it's finding efficiencies, identifying creative opportunities, adding value or implementing new technology to stay ahead of the curve. In some ways, it still feels like early days for AI, but it's actually been here a long time already in various forms and disguises.

For the most part, we've not even noticed and possibly didn't even know it was there. And it's this side of the AI journey that we think is about to change.

For now, it's one to watch, research and play around with. That said, we have a feeling that the speed at which AI becomes integrated into all areas of content creation and the creative process is about to take everyone by surprise.

From 0-100 real quick

New use cases for AI provide an exciting instrument to play with - but don't sleep on this one, things are about to change very quickly

Artificial Intelligence (AI) itself is nothing new in social media. From targeting and monitoring to creating efficient, if sometimes bleak social posts, if you're online, you'll be looking at the product of AI every day.

The very algorithms that decide to show us video after video while knowing we'll never look at them again are, after all, nothing but little robots that gather information about our preferences. But 2022 saw AI take things up a notch on social – as it became not just an enabler to help us manage the day-to-day, but as a shortcut to providing information and a new source of creative opportunities.

In the summertime, we started seeing a lot of hype around platforms like DALL-E2, GTP-3, and MidJourney. A great example of the trend, accessible through Discord, MidJourney has brought us a fascinating new exploration of what the world looks like according to AI, showing strange, funny and extraordinary artistic images generated from any words and images the user chooses to enter. For social, it's pretty cool. Just see the impossible Nike store on top of Mount Everest if you don't believe us!

Our design team have been captivated, although it's hard to say where some of these images could be used for brands – at best they have a dream or game-like quality that is pretty to look at or could be used in the ideation/exploration phases. More recently, TikTok and Instagram feeds have been full of AI-generated images of users themselves courtesy of photo app, Lensa. People have been sharing images of, for example, what AI thinks they will look like at different time periods. Cool, and most CERTAINLY a trend, but at the moment, one with the same impact as an interesting filter.

We continue to see innovations in AI for things like web design, copywriting and SEO, but it's worth remembering that marketers don't need the added complications and complexity of a growing tech toolbox – they need shortcuts to make life easier and more efficient. This is where AI is useful.

For the most part, AI works better with humans. Expert analysts, thinkers, editors, ideas people and strategists who can use the technology as part of their workflow. There's going to be a whole heap of words written on this topic, either by humans or machines. At least for now, for AI to work, our machine overlords like DALL-E2 need creative prompts from real, flesh-and-blood human beings. And, fun though they may be, the images just don't look that... good? Real? Human? That's because they're not... yet. And it's still humans who we are talking to.

No more single-use content in 2023

Throughout the past twelve months, we've seen a significant change around what people expect to see and hear from brands on what has quickly become one of the most important topics of our lifetime. In 2022, we also saw Yvon Chouinard, the rock climbing founder of Patagonia, give away the company (valued at \$3 billion) with profits going towards fighting the climate crisis and protecting the environment. From B Corp Certification to 1% For The Planet to Ecologi's carbon footprint programme (57 million trees planted and counting), we're seeing more and more brands associated with climate-friendly activations. But what does this mean for social media - and more importantly, what can we do, as storytellers, content creators and marketing strategists, to make a difference this year?

First, we have to be authentic and honest in our campaigns around sustainability. Self-awareness is paramount. Second we have to look at the creative process and technology itself in terms of what we can do to make things more sustainable in our approach.

Let's take film production as an example. Video production levels are off the charts as we head into 2023. Typically, 10-30 person crews travelling to multiple destinations over multiple days, all for the creation of maybe one or two pieces of content posted to social. How can we as creators do this better? How can we reduce crews, reduce locations, offset our carbon footprint from travel, shoot more and recycle the content from that one shoot to create multiple content streams? It's entirely possible, it just takes ideas, imagination and planning.

Another example, are we optimising energy consumption with the tech we use to create content? The answer for most, is no. Again, more imagination and better planning is all we need. Reverse engineer the issue: "We need to get X done today but we must be on the screens for Y less time... We need to reduce our energy consumption from our computers by 50% - how can we achieve this?" It's estimated that running a desktop consumes between 80-100% more energy than a laptop. Can you switch over from desktops to laptops? What screens are you using? Consider swapping CRT or LCD with LED screens, which can be up to 30% more efficient. Don't use screensavers, switch to sleep mode wherever possible. Switch from storage on hard disks within computers to SSDs as they don't consume as much power. The list of things we can do to make things better and more efficient as content creators is endless.

So, if making the creation process more sustainable is a top priority, up next must be, "How can we promote sustainability in the very content we make?" The good news is that there is a growing collective of designers, filmmakers, and writers dedicated to doing just this - and we predict more creators this year will follow. Expect a switched balance in focus by brands and content creators away from their own stories of product and purpose and more towards shared stories of people, sustainability and the planet. Consider what a difference we can make, if we are able to use our brand platforms (of hundreds-of-thousands, even millions of fans/followers) to tell sustainability stories as well as product ones. What a fantastic impact that could have inspiring others to do the same.

#7

Sustainable social

Key Takeout

Has content become too throwaway? Have we been creating too much?
Has it become marketing landfill? Perhaps, to remain sustainable we have to go back to basics. Is it effective? Can we be more efficient in how we create?
Can we reimagine and recycle old content?

Let's not continue with single-use, throwaway content - let's focus on providing long-lasting value. Let's question our approach and collectively work together to help build a better future.

Key Takeout

Google has been a verb since some of us were the youngest generation ourselves. Brands (and often not the biggest brands in a category) get joy by being present and investing in platforms like TikTok and Instagram, but always, the key thing for a brand to remember is to design with the audience and platform in mind.

That advice coupled with the impact of TikTok and Instagram on search behaviours might mean some visual changes to Google results pages as we know them. Is now the time to shift budget from search to social?

#8

Google? Not for me

TikTok and Instagram rise in value as the search engines of Gen Z

The rise of TikTok and its lo-fi, people-first, quick, slick and scrollable content has given the entire internet generation a new way of finding and surfacing content that's relevant to them.

Disillusioned by SEO pages stuffed with ads and shopping links that are often difficult to distinguish, younger audiences are instead sticking their search terms in TikTok and Instagram and learning from authentic content from their trusted peers.

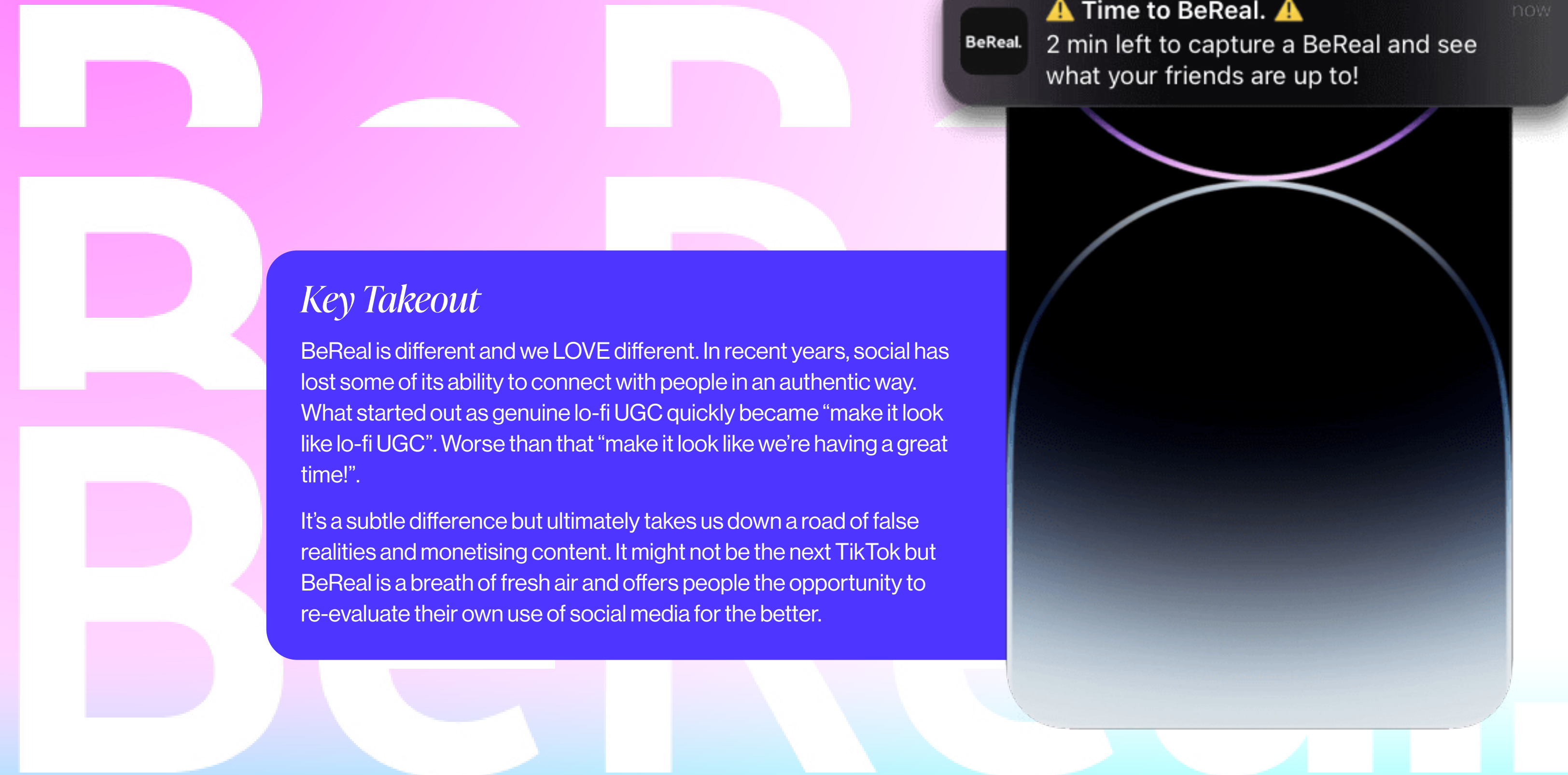
Food, sports, gaming, fashion, beauty and niche interests are all areas in which social excels, and those 'for you' pages are getting more and more accurate by the day. But can social provide rankings alongside 200 different variables for quality? Of course not. But if your brand isn't taking full advantage of the opportunity TikTok presents, 2023 is the time to invest and claim back some of that valuable social / search traffic.

Enter Social SEO. Social SEO aims to increase the visibility of a brand or individual's content on social media platforms, with the goal of driving more traffic, brand awareness and engagement. This can be achieved through a variety of tactics, from basic to advanced: optimising profile information, using relevant keywords, topics, tagging and creating engaging and high-quality content that is likely to be shared and liked by other users, among others. Brands may want to invest more time into this aspect of social. With a little more attention on hygiene work, brands can squeeze continuous value from their original investment now and in the future.

But we can't pretend the "ageing" of traditional search doesn't pose a threat to Google. It suggests that the way the search engine prioritises certain information does not work for some younger audiences. After years at the top, perhaps our Silicon Valley friends have work to do in ensuring that they stay relevant.

Wildcard

BeReal



Key Takeout

BeReal is different and we LOVE different. In recent years, social has lost some of its ability to connect with people in an authentic way. What started out as genuine lo-fi UGC quickly became “make it look like lo-fi UGC”. Worse than that “make it look like we’re having a great time!”.

It’s a subtle difference but ultimately takes us down a road of false realities and monetising content. It might not be the next TikTok but BeReal is a breath of fresh air and offers people the opportunity to re-evaluate their own use of social media for the better.

No filters. No planning. Wouldn’t that be nice?

Currently, in the Top 100 downloaded apps, newcomer platform BeReal recently cleaned up at the App Store Awards, winning iPhone ‘App of the Year’.

Whatever our perfectly curated Instagram feeds would have us believe, life can often be a pretty mundane, unglamorous affair. But no one wants to see that, right? Wrong. Apparently, they do...

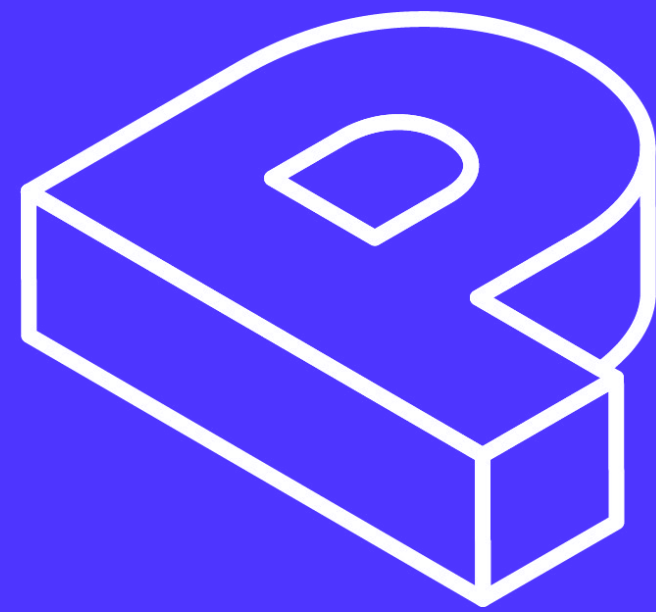
Upon receiving their daily “It’s time to BeReal” notification at random, people have two minutes to share a dual-camera selfie, showing both their face and the standard camera view of what they are doing at that particular moment. If you choose to wait to post a photo later in the day when you are doing something more fun (or Instagrammable), your friends will be able to see that you waited and thus aren’t being “real”. And you can only delete once a day. How is this seemingly simple idea having such a big impact?

The wild success of venture-backed BeReal has some important lessons to teach us about how people, particularly Gen Z, are viewing social media as we move into 2023.

In short, platform fatigue is starting to creep in. People have got so used to posting by the rules of current platforms and their algorithms that it’s starting to become pretty played out. People are also getting tired of comparing themselves to celebrities, influencers and even their own friends whose lives look constantly more fun and aesthetically pleasing than our own. Hey, don’t get us wrong, we love Instagram, but if we’re being real with ourselves (see what we did there) we all know how Instagram scrolling can often leave us feeling. Enter BeReal... an app that prioritises spontaneous connections over image-conscious curation.

Incumbents are sitting up and paying attention in the only way they know how – by copying. They don’t want BeReal to turn into the next Snapchat, or worse, TikTok, which took the social world by storm in ways that Meta still can’t quite manage to emulate. Reels was ‘meh’ last year, it remains ‘meh’ this year. TikTok has introduced a similar Snapshot feature where users can view still images, but have to ‘join the club’ by posting their own. Posting on BeReal is a wonderfully short daily ritual – and that’s why users love it. Giving users the ability to react to each other’s posts with Realmojis is the icing on the cake. Probably the most fun/silly/finest social innovation in the last year!

But what does the future hold for BeReal? The app that defined social in 2022 has to Be Relevant (couldn’t help ourselves there) into the new year. Is it THE new form of journaling in 2023? Will the app just be used for silly/fun memories? After all, it’s just you. The real you.



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