



2020

TRENDS POTTING

C H O O S E Y O U R F U T U R E



Starcom

Choose price. Choose status. Choose programmatic humanoids. Choose giving over your data for free wifi. Choose points. Choose prizes. Choose left or right but nothing in between. Choose light entertainment and welcome escapes. Choose futurism. Choose nowism. Choose sticking to your guns. Choose saving the planet or saving your wallet. Choose what you believe in. Choose digital transformation and agile planning with an augmented automated intelligent reality. Choose going back to basics. Choose... Boris? Choose being human. Choose serving humans. Choose VALUE.

In all the madness and uncertainty of 2019, we almost forgot we were headed into a brand new decade! That's HUGE!

New decades should signal the start of something bigger: a new vibe, a new style and a chance to reset after one of the most intense years in recent British history. And now, as we face 2020 head on, it is imperative the marketing community deals with the hangover of 2019 and gets positive. Consumers need this from us more than ever.

Financial and moral pressures amongst UK citizens will mean that value for money and added value will be consumers' first priority, while they inevitably lean towards those brands and ad campaigns that share their values and worldview.

Respect, transparency and giving back will be key. Self-awareness will be essential. Less talk, more doing, is the right approach. Our trends for 2020 are focused on what we can do now and next, and how we can better our strategies to prepare ourselves for the future, rather than chasing the next big tech trend.

The writer William Gibson said: "the future is already here: it's just not very unevenly distributed." So as brands and communicators it will be essential for us to provide the best

experiences for every audience. Value should sit at the heart of these experiences. We have six trends that encapsulate this theme, and Starcom can help you decide which is most relevant to you and your business.

Starcom is a communications agency and our role is to help you communicate better with your audiences, through positive experience. To close the expectation gap between what they want and what you deliver. These 6 trends provide the perfect springboard for your consumer engagement strategies in 2020 and beyond.





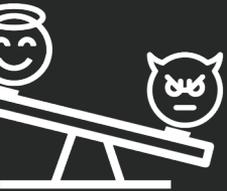
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The price is right, for now
(cheap highs vs. long-term lows)



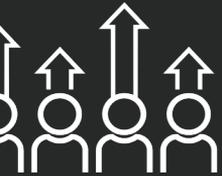
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Transactional data
(access vs. excess)



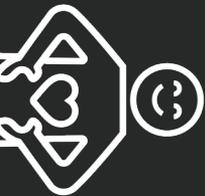
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Marmite morality
(extremism vs. apathy)



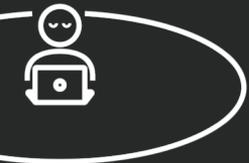
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All-inclusive Design
(we get you vs. you get us)



5

The New Leisure
(always-on upgrades vs. light relief)



6

Connection Cravings
(diverse thinking vs. human robots)

1

The price is right, for now...

In 2010, the Financial Director of Primark's parent company, British Associated Food, declared the success of the discount retailer would change the high street and become the "story of the decade". His predictions were bang on the money. A throwaway culture of quick commerce, next day delivery, and fast mega-on-trend fashion have become the new normal. Technology and dynamic pricing has created an ultra-competitive ecommerce landscape of globally imported cut-price goods, and some of Britain's best-loved brands offer reasonable prices for those most affected by austerity. Value-laden retailers such as Lidl are going from strength to strength: two thirds of UK consumers visited Lidl or Aldi over Christmas 2019.

But our relationship with consumerism is increasingly complex. On the one hand we're being told to spend like maniacs to offset a possible recession, but on the other hand, scientists are telling us to stop. The effects of decades of cheap goods and hyper-consumerism are catching up with us. Climate change documentaries and the "Attenborough Effect" have caused 75% of UK shoppers to make conscious changes including cutting out plastic and reducing non-essential purchases, which a study by the *Journal of Industrial Ecology* estimates are responsible for around 60% percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and between 50 - 80% percent of total land, material, and water use. But the reality is that being good - buying organic, vegan and ethical - often costs extra. When it comes to what consumers buy, where they buy it from and how much they pay, most people are a combination of good and bad. No one's perfect: and despite the UK population having the best of intentions, we need to be realistic about what they can afford, and how brands can 'give back' by way of compromise.



Tension: Cheap Fling vs. Long-Term Commitment

UK consumers love the dopamine hit of a bargain, and Black Friday, which was joined by Cyber Monday has become a week-long event for many brands. Will 2020 signal the start of a whole month dedicated to discounts? Disember, maybe? One thing's for sure: consumers' expectations for a great deal, even from the most premium brands, are sky-high.

But a new wave of industry entrants are joining the fun. By cutting out the middle-man, subscription brands including Beauty Pie and Dollar Shave Club have combined convenience of delivery, quality products and an opportunity to buy the best for less, disrupting the category and the brands that dominate it in the process. By streamlining production, the consumer is able to benefit from the best prices instead of paying more for expensive brand names or marketing materials other beauty brands use to "bump up" the cost and increase their margins. Technology has also helped a number of Direct to Consumer (DTC) brands emerge with products that compete on both price and technical superiority, without exploitation or damage to the environment.

But for many slower, bigger international brands, cutting costs just isn't that simple, and a rush to compete could have devastating long-term impact. This means that transparency and integrity are key, and educating consumers on pricing models. The food industry has been quick to respond to this. Starbucks, Carrefour, Nestlé and M&S have successfully implemented blockchain and DNA traceability into the production line for coffee, dairy and beef in an effort to allow consumers to connect more with the agricultural process and even "meet" the people responsible for the products they consume, through photos and information about their farms.

Human Experience Implications

Many brands have suffered from the 'race to the bottom'. Telecommunications and travel, for example, have in previous years seen companies lower their costs to consumers at the expense of customer service, which can have a negative impact on perception and loyalty. The trick here is to focus your communications on product strength and quality, whilst making it as easy as possible for people to access your products: people won't seek you out if a cheaper model is easier to get hold of.

So, think about new and engaging ways for people to buy your products. Shoppable media, augmented 'try before you buy' creative and even new ways to pay (Adidas, for example, has launched a 'pay later' option across its ecommerce) will ensure your audience like you for your purchase process as well as your products. But even advertising itself can be valuable: new services such as Good Loop also allow you to give back through ads themselves, offering users the chance to donate to charity after seeing your ad.

Brand Examples

Google

In August 2019, Google Flights announced that it was trialling a free price guarantee feature for bookings made between 13 August and 2 September 2019. As the brand explained, “for some flight prices, Google’s algorithms are confident that the price you’re seeing is the lowest available before the flight departs. After you book on Google, we’ll keep monitoring the price until take-off, and if it drops, you’ll automatically get the difference back”. Eligible flights are marked with a colourful badge.



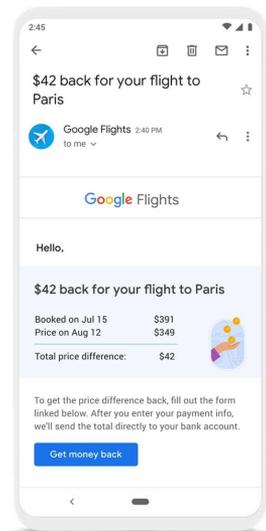
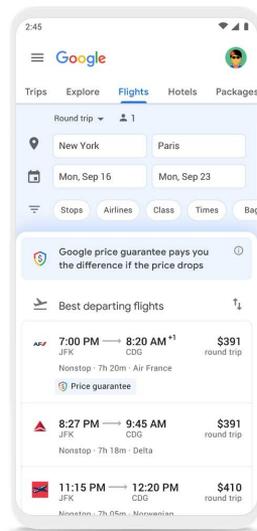
A ‘fast fashion’ brand that allows you to shop the latest millennial trend consciously. They work with their suppliers in India to pay their workers fairly, support the Living Wage in the UK, make their clothes from ethical and recyclable materials, and ensure their packaging is 100% biodegradable.

bunq

Dutch challenger bank BUNQ has created a “green card” in partnership with Eden Reforestation Projects to plant a tree for every €100 spent. BUNQ claims that the green impact of a user who spends €1,000 a month with a BUNQ Green Card is such that it takes just five years to start offsetting their yearly carbon footprint and be fully carbon neutral.



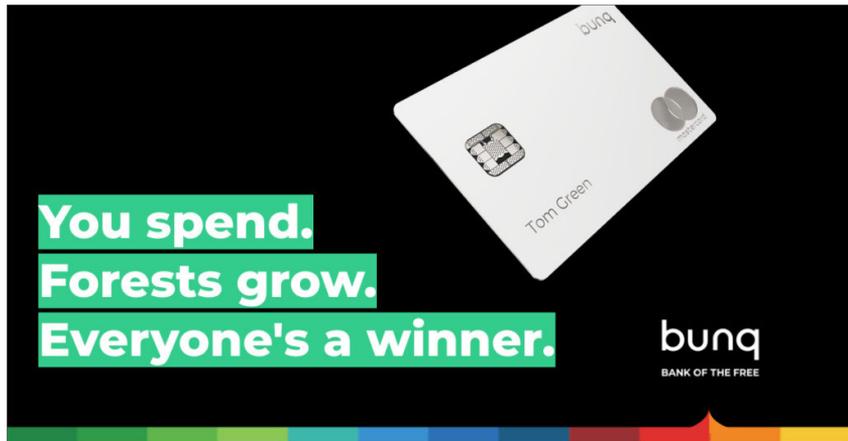
Google



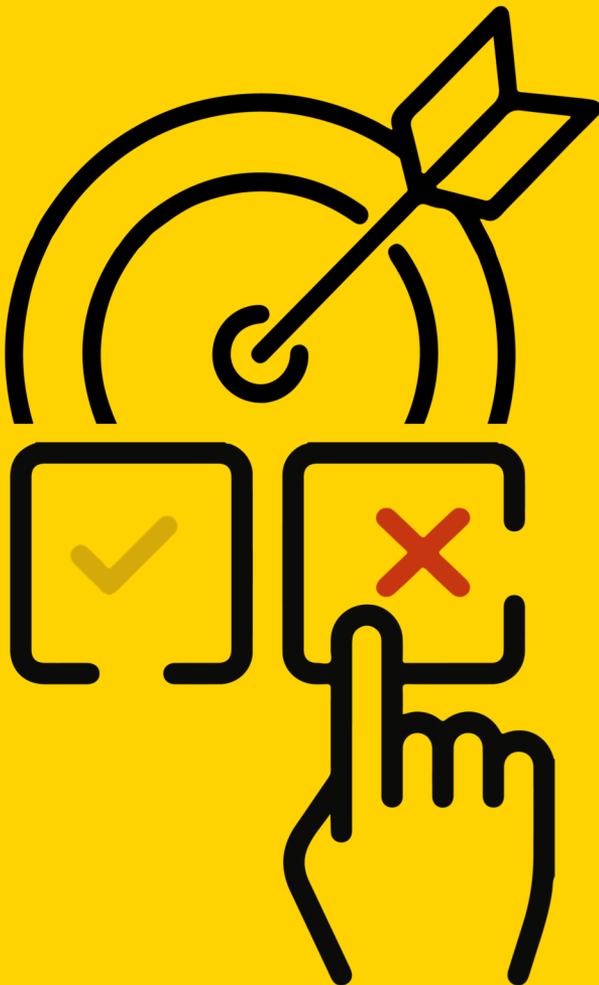
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bunq



2 Transactional data



Ten years ago, it was unlikely consumers knew much about the concept of 'data' let alone understood the value exchange involved in sharing basic information such as age, gender and email addresses with businesses. In 2020 - thanks to a number of big news stories and Netflix documentaries, as well as GDPR kicking in a couple of years ago - we're dealing with a far savvier population. From an advertising perspective, this could be considered both a blessing and a curse!

Personal data is no longer an unknown quantity, but a valuable commodity to be traded and kept safe. As the amount - and variety - of data grows, so too does the appreciation of its value. Many consumers are open to a fair exchange; they accept a need to give data-sharing consent, but expect tangible rewards in return. It is no longer acceptable to hide your behind-the-scenes marketing methods from consumers, and a more educated audience means we need to be smarter and more creative with our uses of data, which has big implications for targeting, re-targeting and personalisation.

2

Tension: Access vs. Excess

After the Cambridge Analytica scandal, Facebook, reportedly lost around 20% of their consumer base. During that same time period, Instagram (a Facebook-owned company), surpassed the one billion active users mark (June 2018, as published by Statista). With 2.3 billion active users globally, Facebook still remains the leading social media platform. Which raises the question, do people actually care about misuse of their data, if there is a clear benefit in using the platform?

Consumer research shows two very different audience perspectives, which is largely driven by age. For example, according to the Foresight Factory, 62% of Generation Z agree with the statement: "I expect to have some share of my personal details online in exchange for something I might want." Yet at the same time, 84% of baby boomers want more control over their data and who has access to it. In fact, 26% have opted out of any data sharing completely.

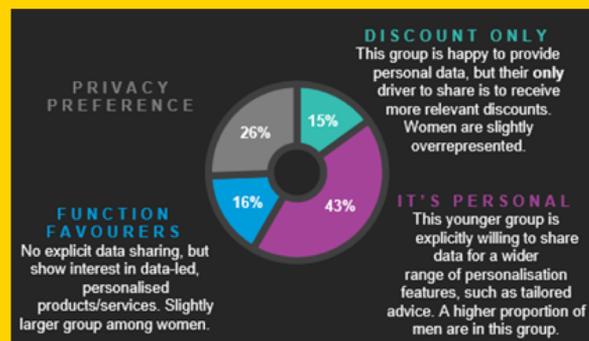
The chart below shows that attitudes towards data are no longer black and white. What we're seeing is that consumers are happy to share certain information if the payoff is significant and there are rewards involved (free Wi-Fi being the perfect example). There's also a slight gender skew, with men more

comfortable with sharing their data than women, with the latter favouring a value exchange in the form of discounts. But when data is used to excess is when a lot of consumers start to get worried: in fact, according to a survey by InMoment last year, 75% of consumers find personalisation a bit creepy.

Human experience implications

Do you really need to use someone's name in that video-on-demand ad? Do we really need to know someone's age via facial recognition when they're looking at an interactive D6? (The answer is no!) Sometimes the most effective personalisation is subtle and focused on what consumers need, rather than how they look.

Don't be 'clever with data' for the sake of it, instead think about how what you've learned about your audience can make their experience better. In 2020 we need to be more overt about how we're using people's data, and why. "You told us x, so we're giving you y" is a perfect example. In addition, when people share their data in return for value (i.e. a sample) they do not want to be emailed every afternoon with more offers and mindless content.



Data privacy segmentation: all consumers.
Foresight Factory, 2019.



Brand examples



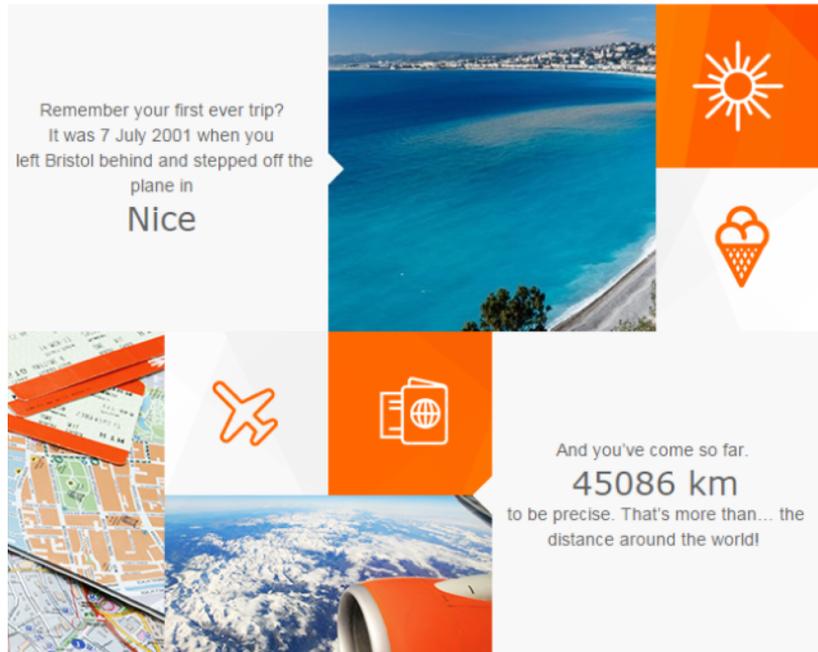
Opu Labs is an intelligent skin care platform that analyses skin data from facial scans. It monetises the skin data by offering advice and products. In June 2018, it launched an ICO for its Ethereum-backed token the Opu Coin. Consumers are rewarded with Opu Coins when they submit their skincare data, sign up for a dermatologist's clinical trial, or allow a skincare brand to use their data. The coins can then be used to buy advice or products through the platform.

easyJet

To mark its 20th anniversary, the brand launched a data-driven campaign that brought each customer's travel history with the airline to life. Its email campaign used customer data to build individual stories, such as when and where they first travelled with easyJet, and where they might like to go next. The emails used 12 modules combining graphic devices, destination imagery and copy based on 28 key data points. A total of 12,473,608 unique emails were sent, and open rates were over 100% higher than the average easyJet newsletter - with 25% higher click-through rates.



easyJet



3 Marmite morality

Whether left or right, Leave or Remain, woke or, well... not woke, the political intensity of the last few years, as well as a change in social behaviours via platforms like Twitter, has resulted in an extreme polarisation of people and opinions. Whether it's related to gender, race, disability, sexuality or any of the Protected Characteristics as outlined in the UK's 2010 Equality Act our ethics are being questioned and our moralities tested.

Hot on the heels of #MeToo, speaking out has become the new norm, and honesty is rewarded with public approval. Those who are speaking out are seen as beacons of courage, such as the gymnasts who accused former USA Gymnastics national team doctor, Larry Nassar, and Helen Evans, the whistleblower responsible for bringing to light global unethical issues at Oxfam. More broadly, speaking out about formerly taboo subjects, such as menstruation, has become more socially acceptable and widespread, as authenticity and honesty become more valued. When Bodyform and Refinery29 partnered on #BloodNormal - a campaign to allow realistic red liquid in sanitary adverts - women everywhere rejoiced! (And the campaign won lots of awards!)

What we say, and how we say, it has never been more important. Being 'bold', whether individual or brand can have negative consequences too, and 'cancel culture' is very

real. In the last six months approximately 15,366 celebrities were cancelled for saying the wrong thing (fake stat, but you get the point)! Madame Tussauds was described as racist for removing their Harry and Meghan waxworks, after the couple announced they were stepping away from royal duties. And the consumer discovery that cult fitness brand SoulCycle's owner was funding Donald Trump's Republican efforts led to a mass boycott in the US.





Tension:

Extremism vs. Apathy

Cancelling culture has made for a strange social dynamic. Whilst some people are embracing activism, moving away from simple petitions to full-on crowdsourced campaigns, at the same time there is a new wave of disillusioned consumers accepting the unethical behaviours of businesses, which is nurturing a state of apathy. And the social 'echo chamber' means that rarely do these two groups interact.

But as the times change, there has been an emergence of brands "born in the age of activism" that are capturing and cornering the activist market by making their products a form of activism themselves. Think Oatly milk, who do nothing by the book. Their product has sparked a revolution in coffee shop culture, their advertising is self-aware, and their media buying (which Starcom was involved in) is razor-sharp and digitally integrated. Tony's Chocaloney (delicious, brightly coloured, ethical chocolate) is a further example: they're everywhere! The emergence of these new brands with "built-in morals" means it'll be harder for brands who've merely dipped their toes into 'meaningful' to justify these positions. Mediatel columnist, Dominic Mills, said at the beginning of 2020 "brands should stop trying to change the world and start changing themselves for the better."

Human Experience Implications

In 2019 Starcom partnered with Twitter to understand the scale of consumer activism and understand where brands can play a role. Our research found that eight in 10 people believe brands are in a position to affect positive change. So let's.

We looked at numerous purpose-driven campaigns to ascertain their successful attributes as well as their impact on the brand overall. Using a driver analysis, we quantified the importance of 14 separate criteria for increasing brand positivity. From this, we saw a clear mandate: The most substantial contribution to campaign success came from grabbing people's attention, inspiring them to get involved, and sparking conversation. We used this data to help identify four pillars of good purpose-driven marketing.

Excitement: The first of these four pillars is the highest contributor (33%) to an increase in brand positivity. Key elements include inspiration, involvement, and conversation. This requires brands to move from shouting about causes to providing experiences rooted in solid insights about what the audience really cares about.

Brand fit: This includes attributes such as authenticity and alignment between brand and cause. It accounts for 26% of brand impact. Consumers are increasingly switched onto lip service versus a desire for real change, and the likelihood is they'll call it out when they don't see it.

Resonance: Accounting for 24% of brand impact, here the focus is around topicality, timing, and value to the consumer. By its very nature, social is the best place for a topical, cultural movement to take hold and do great things.

Ambition: Responsible for 17% of brand impact, ambition is about the brand taking a risk and committing itself to supporting a purpose with longevity. It's important for brands to think about the long-term goal of their activism and what they're trying to achieve.

Brand examples

Glossier.

In March 2019, beauty brand Glossier's new line Glossier Play was called out online for not being eco-friendly due to its use of non-biodegradable glitter. Customer backlash against Glitter Gelée, a glitzy eye gel packed with polyethylene terephthalate particles was fast and furious, since Glossier's core customer base is eco-concerned Millennials. In response, Glossier has announced that recyclable packaging options and biodegradable glitter are in its development pipeline.

patagonia

The clothing company has been creating beautiful films that discuss issues around the environment in its own unique style, directly aimed at the brand's core audience. Its 2019 film Treeline, for example, follows skiers, snowboarders, scientists and healers as they pay homage to forests. This follows a long-term commitment to entertainment from the brand, which saw the power of documentaries to help "inspire solutions to the environmental crisis" way back in 2015.



In partnership with Starcom, Herbal Essences celebrated their ongoing partnership with Kew Gardens by creating living and breathing billboards that helped people save the planet! They erected billboards in Kentish Town, Old Street and Clapton but these were no average posters - each site contained growing foliage and 3,000 detachable leaves filled with wildflower seeds. Passers-by could pick a leaf and plant the seeds, to help the pollinating insects in their area. This billboard with purpose was a first of its kind in London.



Glossier.



patagonia



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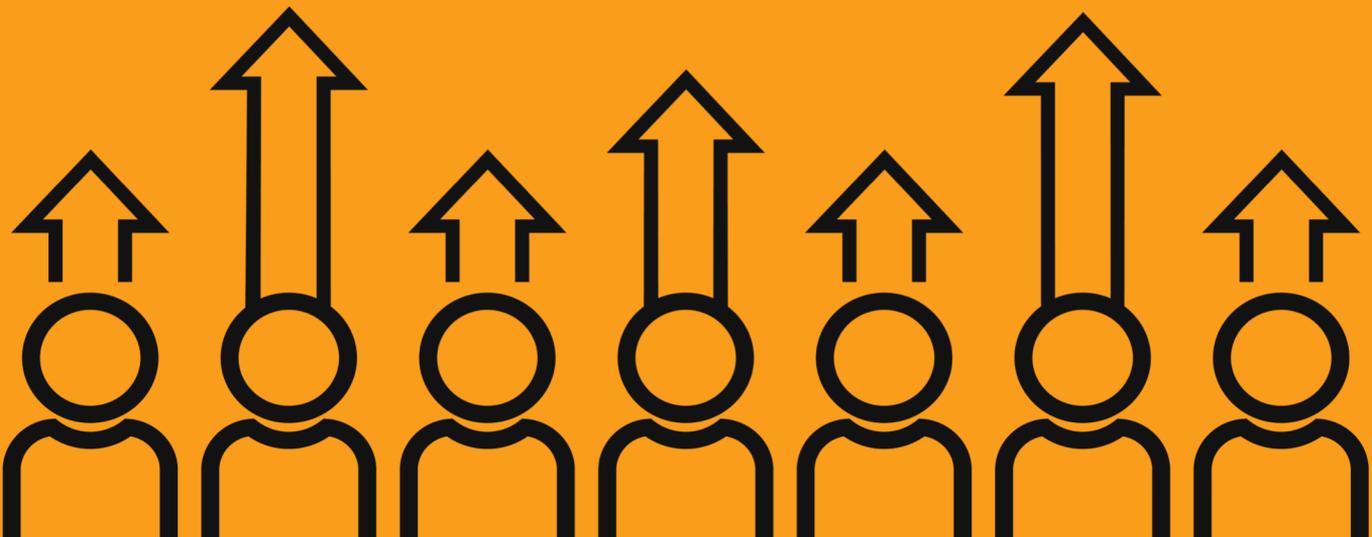
All-inclusive Design

Has 'diversity' become a buzzword? A box-ticking exercise or bandwagon that every business is hopping on? What's long been led in the brand world by the likes of Nike has crept onto the agenda of many marketers. Well, less crept, more backflipped with big brass trumpets and a bright yellow spotlight. But with an increased, utterly essential focus on diversity comes a wider conversation. 2020 and beyond should be about inclusion: making all consumers feel included in the brand experience and throughout the purchase journey.

But despite the last couple years' efforts still, 43% of UK consumers feel advertising does not do a good enough job at representing diversity. Many consumers are being made to feel too

old, too working class, even too weird to buy certain products, based on the advertising they see. Brands need to work harder to be relevant, and being relevant means new insights, new audiences, and a new approach. Making every customer feel valued, and seen. It doesn't just mean a black model, a white model and an Asian model in your skincare ad in Vogue!

Some businesses are starting to shape their entire shopping experience around consumer behaviour, attempting to disrupt the status quo and typical journey in many industries... banks that are mobile-only, plastic-free supermarkets and easy-to-access pharmaceutical vending machines are just a few examples.



4

Tension: We Get You vs. You Get Us

People-centric planning is the present, and the future. More knowledge, more emotion, more agility. At Starcom, we obsess over insights and you can drive great return from understanding the consumer more than everybody else. Conversely, retaining an air of exclusivity and a 'come to us' mentality can also be an interesting brand-building strategy. Let's explore both.

Last year The New York Times (NYT) said it was getting ads to perform 40% better by getting to know people better. What did this mean? Quite simply, and innovatively, targeting people based on emotion. They identified the 30 most commonly-felt emotions after reading NYT stories and now enable marketers to target people based on how they are likely to feel after consuming certain types of content. This means we can now create ads and digital experiences for the happy, hopeful, fearful (!) inspired, nostalgic and - most importantly - in the mood to spend money! This demonstrates that getting to know your customers and being inclusive to their needs and moods, really pays off.

However in 2020, perhaps being inclusive can mean something different, too? Perhaps it means having a brand that is so unique and so well-understood with a truly differentiated tone that everyone wants to come along for

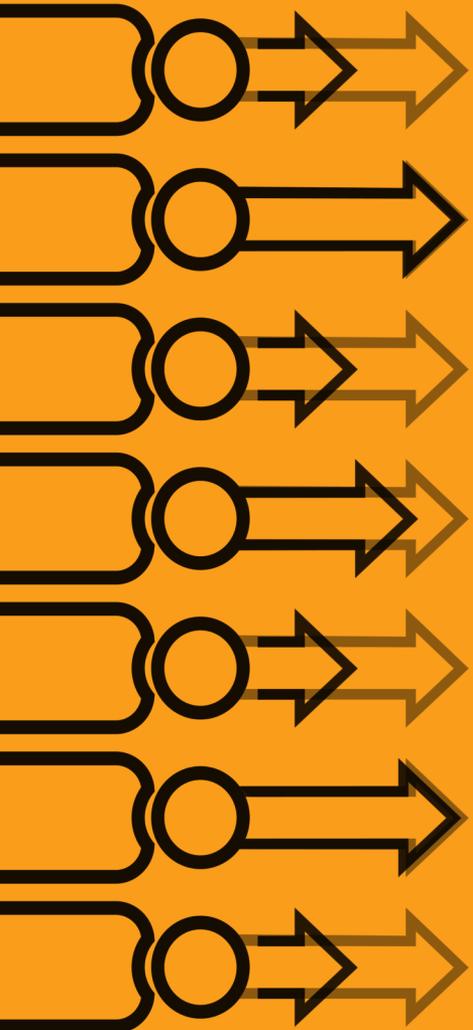
the ride. According to the State of Experiential Study in 2019, 67% of senior marketers intend to increase their experiential budgets. These big shows in public places, generating wow and getting everyone talking was massive in 2019 and looks set to get even bigger. Perhaps the wildest example is Skittles in the US, who created their very own Broadway musical complete with a song entitled "Advertising Ruins Everything." Finally, something all consumers can get on board with!

Human Experience implications

When planning inclusive campaigns in 2020, we need to focus on two key things: the audience approach, and the experience design. When it comes to audience approach, think about moving away from cheesy 18 to 24 audience segments, and outside of our London bubble. Think about how you can be more relevant to different communities in the UK and whether age (for example) is even that important to your brand. Think about attitude and behaviour, and not just social class. We truly believe that 2020 will be the beginning of a revolution in terms of how we look at, and plan for, different audiences. And consider how every single experience across every touchpoint includes, rather than alienates these audiences. Ask your Starcom planning team to visualise the inclusive ecosystem in big campaign responses, and where they are addressing any pain points or friction in the purchase journey. From a creative perspective, think inclusive, not tokenistic.



24



Brand Examples



Research commissioned by Channel 4 (online survey instead of focus groups) revealed that the main problem facing women is the roles they are portrayed in, rather than overall levels of representation. The RAF 'No Room for Clichés' campaign challenged gender stereotypes by juxtaposing these with the work of the RAF's female on the front line.



With the launch of UNO Braille, Mattel is not only serving a specific community, but also making a classic game accessible across all audiences. Players can also access voice-enabled instructions through Amazon Alexa and Google Home, making UNO more accessible and inclusive to even more families. Mattel has also just launched (in 2020) their most diverse range of Barbies, with more skin, hair and body types than ever.



Bumble's latest campaign - Find Them On Bumble Bizz: London Edition - was designed to shine a light on the diverse leaders of businesses, founders and entrepreneurs in the capital. Focusing on the power of connection (not privilege) it featured 53 real Bumble Bizz users bringing their career stories to life through video, outdoor and a major content push. Telling the stories of real people overcoming adversity to flourish in their careers plays into Bumble's founding principle to democratise access to opportunity.



5

Upgrade Utopia

What constitutes 'entertainment' has changed. However it looks, it's more intense. And as Generation Z and the millennial generation take over the world the definition of 'leisure' is likely to change dramatically. The rise in people who seek self-improvement in their down-time is significant. According to the Foresight Factory (2019), 60% of people agree with the statement: "entertainment should be about learning new things as much as simply having fun." Side hustles. Side hustles, everywhere.

The itch to upgrade is not only driven by rising affluence and greater individual freedom but also by the acute sense that, under the pressures of the attention economy, leisure time must be squeezed of all its value. Consumers wish to achieve a level of professionalism in their chosen hobby. Some even turn their hobbies into careers – 31% of GB consumers claim to have made money outside of their regular income from their skills. It's unfortunate timing, then, that content and programming has never been better! The amount of entertainment distractions we have is multiplying yearly.



5

Tension: Upgrades vs. Immerscapism

The pressure to succeed is always-on. Whether it's founding a new start-up or being on a Forbes list or hiking to Kilimanjaro, social humble bragging is pushing us all to be our best. However, there exists a rebellion. A Disney Plus addiction could be real in 2020, and now new virtual reality social networks are launching (i.e. Facebook Horizon) that will see people literally living in the digital realm, escapism is big business.

In today's society, consumers face pressure from multiple areas to be better – be better workers, eaters, partners, parents. In response to the exhausting push for perfection, some consumers are looking for entertainment and leisure to be purely that. Against a backdrop of constant optimisation, some consumers are looking for objective-free activity. "Unproductive" leisure pursuits are growing in popularity. Traditional forms of play, as well as tactile activities like pottery, are all becoming valuable forms of winding down. Watching "trashy" TV or binge-watching are also popular ways to unwind, with 66% of GB consumers in 2019 having binge-watched a TV series.

And light relief is becoming even more engaging, with the rise of immersive theatre

and VR stage shows in the UK's big cities. Already in 2020 interactive productions such as War of the Worlds, Wolf of Wall Street and The Great Gatsby are entertaining thousands of consumers and brands are getting involved too, with sponsorship deals and product placement.

Human Experience Implications

What do you want to do: make your consumers better, or entertain the hell out of them? Our guess is that in 2020 unless you have truly remarkable media budgets, it's going to be hard to do both. Pick a lane, and whatever you do make sure it packs a punch, because real entertainment is more intense than it's ever been, so brands will find it hard to compete.

And when offering escapism, it's important to understand from a 'moments' perspective, what it is we're helping consumers escape from? Is it the monotony of everyday life, or maybe even something grander? Immersive social networks and VR games can be a great cure for loneliness, for example.



5

Brand examples

ballie ballerson

London's first ever ball-pit bar. In September 2019, it opened a second 6,000 ft² site in Soho. At the Soho branch, guests can dive into two neon-lit ball pits filled with one million balls, before refuelling with pizza and cocktails – all till 4am in the morning. The venue also hosts bottomless brunches on Saturdays and Sundays.

Kultur- vitaminer

A ten-week programme in Aalborg, Denmark, that launched in summer 2019. Partially funded by the Danish health authority, it seeks to use art, music and culture to treat those suffering from anxiety and depression. Participants are invited to engage in creative workshops and other pursuits such as singing and theatre. These cultural activities are meant to free anxious individuals of the pressure to be productive, and help them truly value their leisure time.



Launched the Plant Parent Club, giving members access to online workshops, weekly newsletters with plant care tips and a discount on all online orders. The annual membership is designed to “empower all people to be plant people” by educating and helping customers care for their plants. The Sill is helping customers who enjoy gardening to improve their skills and learn more about the best type of plants for each space and the best way to keep them healthy.

ballie ballerson



Kultur-
vitaminer

Denmark is prescribing 'culture vitamins' - group activities like singing, going to shows and exercise - to lift people out of depression

The Happy Broadcast



The Sill

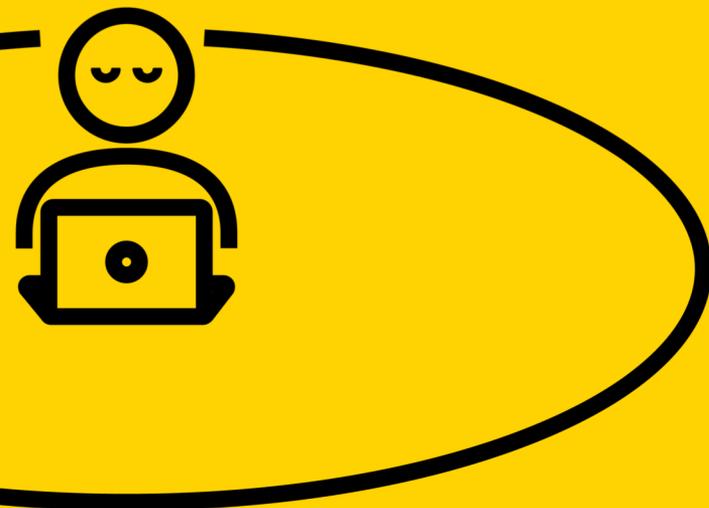
Introducing the Plant Parent Club

The Sill welcomes you to the *Plant Parent Club* where all people are plant people. Find inspiration, tips, and confidence in plant care to become the best plant parent possible.

6 Connection Cravings

Forget AI (it's been around since 1958, it's NOT A NEW TREND!) the most worrying thing in the UK tech space is the rise of human robots. No, we don't mean lifelike killing machines like The Terminator. Rather, we mean the trend for urban citizens to think, act and buy the same, whilst tracking their every move with technology.

We've already seen a rise in loneliness, not just among the older generations, but Generation Z. In fact, according to a study conducted by UCLA in 2019, Generation Z is the loneliest generation. Time with social media and screens is rising, and amongst the younger demographics increasingly immersive platforms such as TikTok are commanding more attention and emotion. But some needs can't be fulfilled with technology (get your mind out of the gutter!) Brands can play such an important role here; whilst tech should be central to making people's lives easier, surely we can also use it to celebrate many different voices and true individuality? These connections, for us, are the ultimate solution for brands in 2020.



6

Tension:

Diverse Thinking vs. Human Robots

We are seemingly more 'connected' than ever before. At the tap or swipe of a finger, we have access to friends, food, dates, sex, home inspiration and a world of retail and services. We have 'social' media on tap, with 85% of UK consumers active on social in the last three months. These platforms have an enormous potential for positive action and providing for communities (you just have to look at the fact that Celeste Barber was able to raise over \$40 million for the Australian bushfires), yet 80% of users believe these platforms can have a negative effect on mental health (Mintel, UK May 2019).

Living in a digital world means that we are often replacing real world interactions with virtual ones. Automation provides opportunity for greater convenience for brands and consumers, reducing friction in the customer journey (e.g. LookAfterMyBills which automatically switches consumers' energy supplier whenever they can save money - I'm sure nobody misses those phone calls!) However, consumers are still looking for human encounters in addition to efficiency and time-saving. According to the Foresight Factory (2019), 74% of people would still prefer to speak to a human when making a complaint to a business.

This decade, consumers (in particular Gen Z and Millennials) will be looking for brands who they can identify with, who speak to their values and can connect them with broader purposes. Orlando Wood in his publication 'Lemon' argues that tensions exist in our hemispherical thinking. That we are too reliant on 'left-brain thinking' and that as a result advertising has lost its power to persuade, entertain and make people feel, where instead of driving connections between people we are focused on logic, performance, turning advertising 'sour'. We need to intervene to bring the creativity back to advertising and encourage diverse thinking not just human robots.

Human experience implications

It's all about the human experience! Think about the real world: real people having real conversations in real time can be where your brand stands out in a sea of automated noise. Technology will never be able to replace the need for human connection. Although there are a host of brands and apps popping up to digitally assist relationships (e.g. Lasting, which is a marriage therapy app, Raft - an app for syncing schedules and Honeydue, which is for financial planning), psychotherapists warn that these should be used with caution, and brands should be mindful of chatbots or AI solutions replacing human interaction beyond efficiency. Brands can act as the facilitators of conversations, helping consumers focus on what unites rather than divides their communities. For example, Heineken's Open Your World Campaign or Ben & Jerry's ice cream hosted political discussions at one of its ice cream parlours in Brazil to promote values of freedom, respect, tolerance and love.



alongside access to a limited amount of HBO content. The campaign is framed in opposition to algorithmically driven streaming platforms like Netflix. Instead of relying on data-driven suggestions, HBO emphasises the emotional connection behind peer-to-peer recommendations.

Brand examples



Lipton Tea 'You, Me, Tea, Now #ProjectUnlonely campaign and McVitie's 'Let's Talk' partnership with Mind, utilise the brand platform and voice (with a relevant product connection) to enable real life connections. Already this year, PG Tips is telling people to "share a cuppa" with a friend, neighbour or loved one.

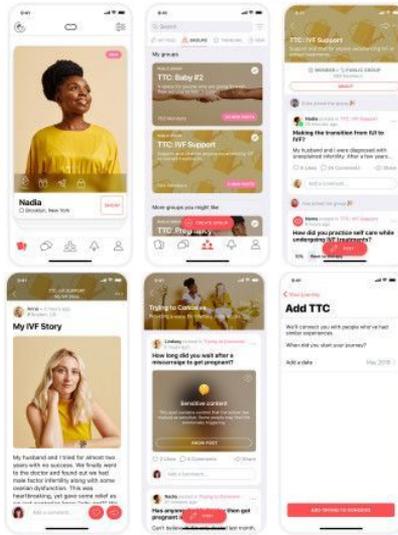


Brands should take note of a host of start-ups that are seeking to provide deeper social connections. A great example of this is social media platform Peanut, designed to connect women at all stages of mothering, which the founder identified as a common cause of loneliness and provides both advice and information, but also enabling connections in real life between mothers.



In August 2019, HBO launched a new campaign and website called Recommended By Humans. The site showcases tweets and videos from fans recommending series and documentaries,







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