



PART OF CEUTA GROUP

2022 SEARCH & DIGITAL MARKETING TRENDS REPORT

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Contributors



John Warner
Digital Marketing
Manager



Andrew Whyman
Senior Organic Search
Executive



David Gossage
SEO Manager



Sophie Edwards
Head of Campaign
Outreach



Dave Ashworth
Head of Design



Karen Campbell
Head of Copy



Alan Reeves
Director of Search



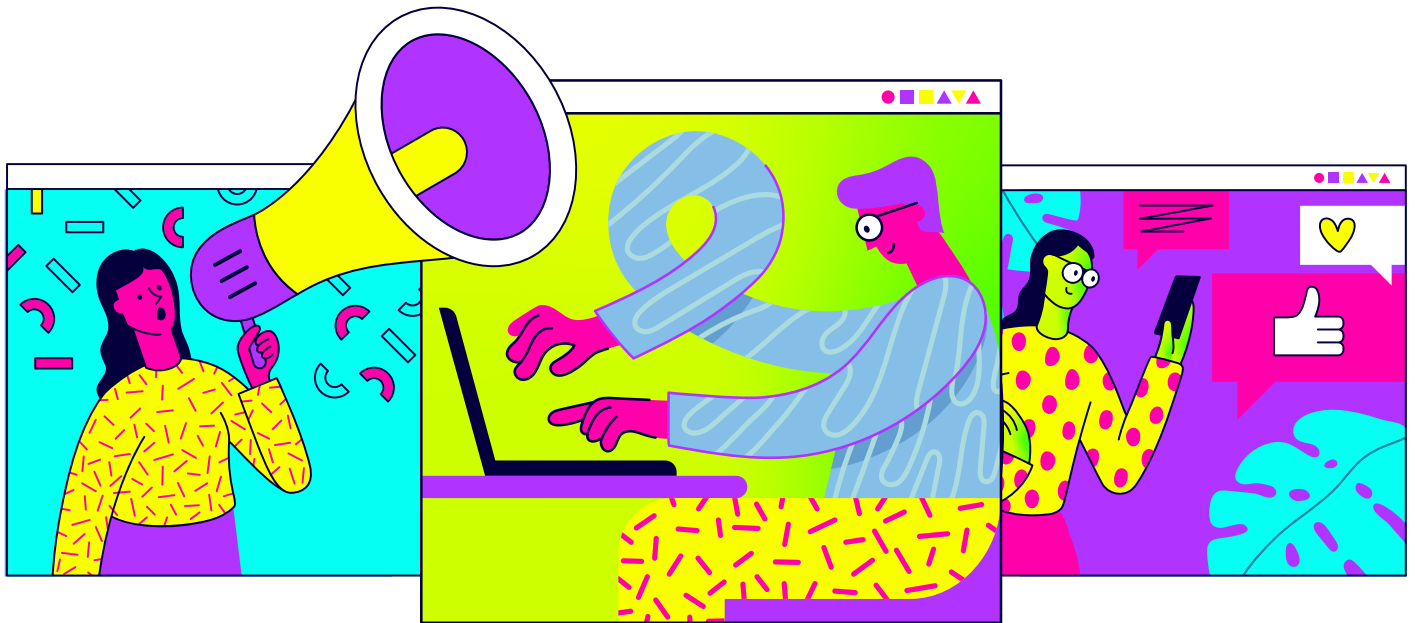
Will Dixon
Head of Paid Media



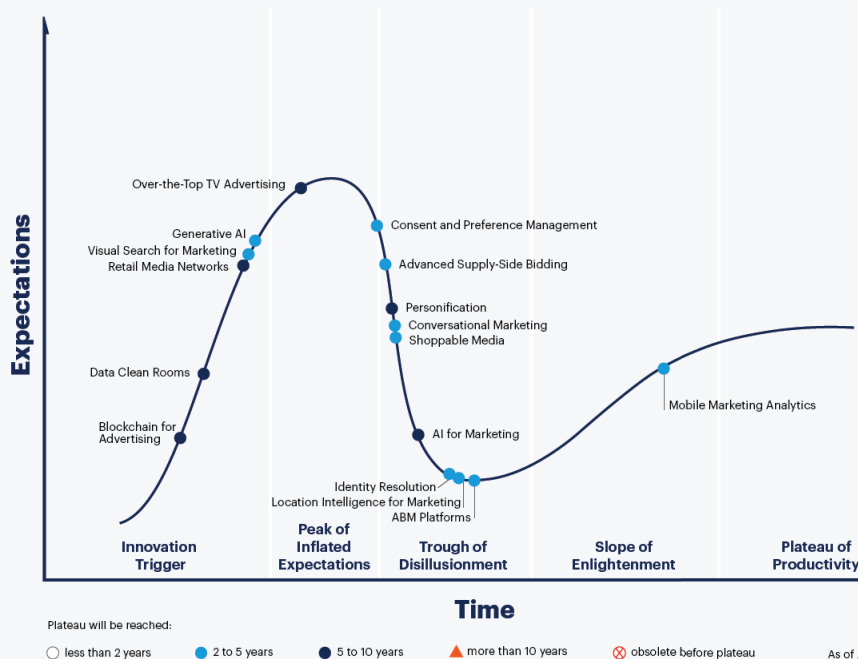
Andrew Smith
Marketing Director

Introduction

Despite coming at the end of one tumultuous year and at the beginning of another, last year's predictions were pretty consistently inline with developments. From the increased use of NLP in search algorithms to the need to evaluate device targeting, the permanence of work from home and more, we had a good year. In the blink of an eye, however, here we are again – faced with another year of data to digest and another year to predict.



Hype Cycle for Digital Advertising 2021



gartner.com

The year ahead looks to be one of promise rather than delivery for some of the hyped trends of the last year – so, while we've tried to make our predictions based on the trends that we've witnessed throughout the last twelve months, you'll note that there are some which have been common in other 2022 prediction pieces but that are absent here. This is probably best summed up by the following diagram from Gartner.

While we wouldn't agree with position of all items, we use it here to illustrate that innovations follow a very specific and recognisable path (check previous years – or [this piece by Smart Insights](#) – to see how they've performed historically) which should always be considered to avoid letting ourselves get carried away by the latest shiny things.

Key insights

While each of the predictions are unique, there are themes that pop out from year to year that we think are worth pulling out. These themes, which emerge organically, are indicative of how the various minds behind the predictions see the year ahead through human eyes and a filter of their particular specialism.

This year, predictions show signs of the following themes:



Novelty

Across specialisms, there are predictions which suggest that our experts believe the year ahead will require brands to deliver novel experiences and solutions.

Maturing technology

Whether it's social platforms, code-bases, wearables, AR or a number of others, there are some technologies which are beginning to reach or are taking steps toward what Gartner refers to as the 'plateau of productivity' that will be driving change in 2022.

The changing face of the web

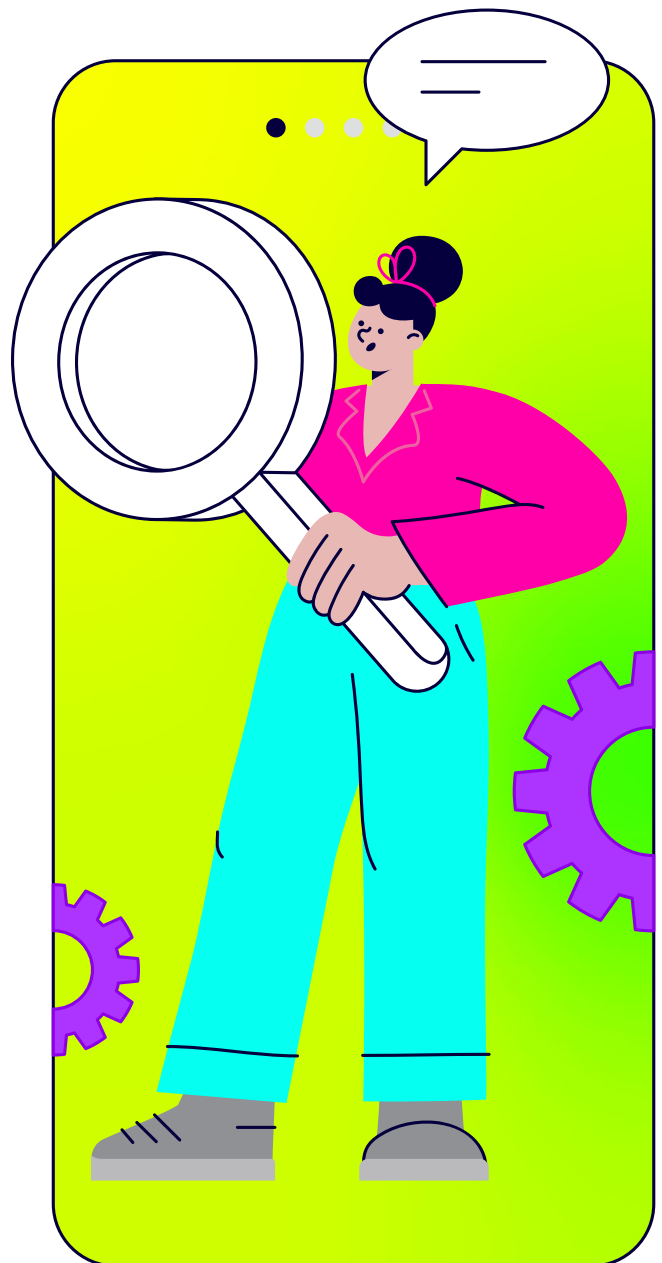
Whether it's sooner or later, there appears to be a consensus among our experts that there is a change coming in how websites are presented and our expectations of how they look and how they function.

Industry Trends

REFLECTIONS

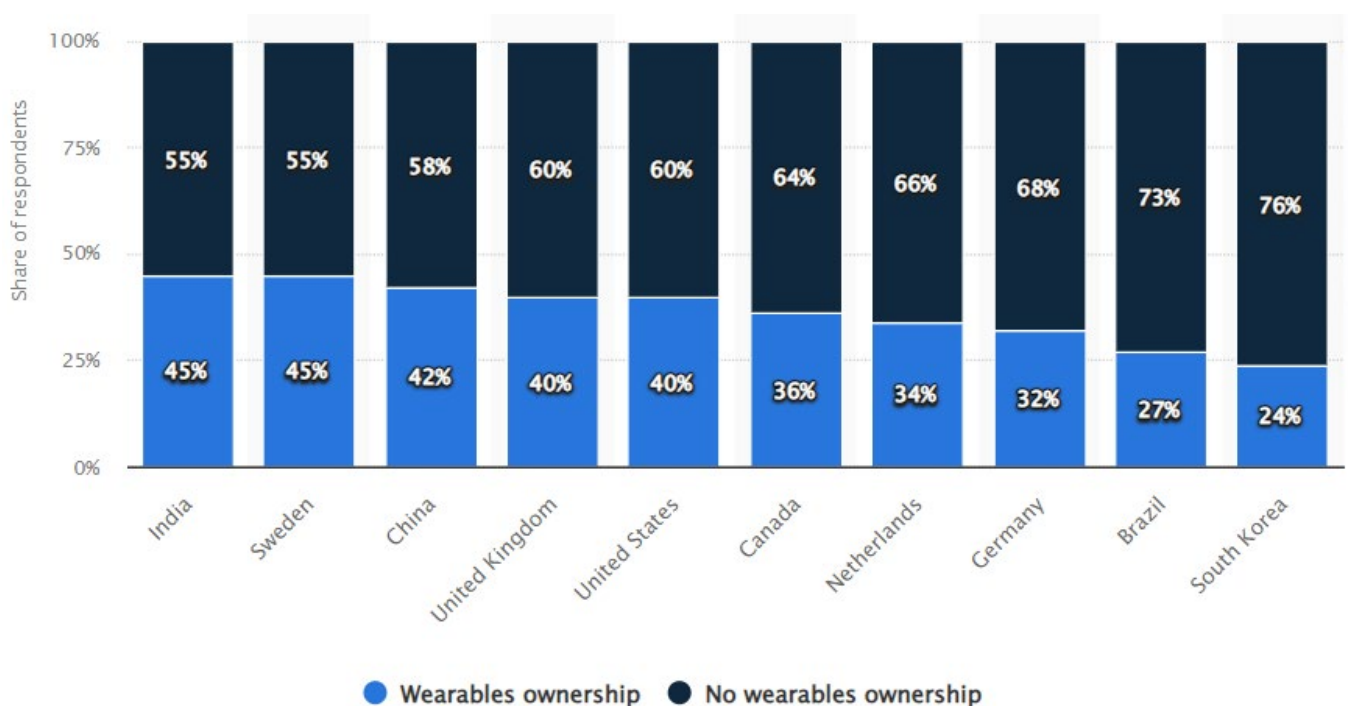
Last year's introduction to industry trends consisted mainly of a disclaimer that rendered all predictions moot in the case of further, more suddenly apocalyptic world events. Thankfully, we were able to continue with just the slow-moving apocalypses that we're all familiar with. While even the most pessimistic among us have been surprised by the likely continuation of COVID concerns for another year, an obstinate and cheerful disdain for the virus has meant that the UK and US have pretty much returned to normal – or as close as we'll get for a while.

As such, last year's predictions were able to proceed much as we would have expected for the most part and were, to greater or lesser degrees, pretty much on the money – though the current US presidency has managed to limbo under low expectations and the long wait for action on big tech monopolies has stumbled slowly ever onward.



2021 didn't see huge leaps in machine generated content – though it definitely did begin to creep in at the edges of the industry, with various GPT3 integrations appearing to write product descriptions, alt-text and meta-descriptions. This will likely accelerate as OpenAI has broadened access to its GPT3 model, removed waiting lists and allowed **general access through its API.**

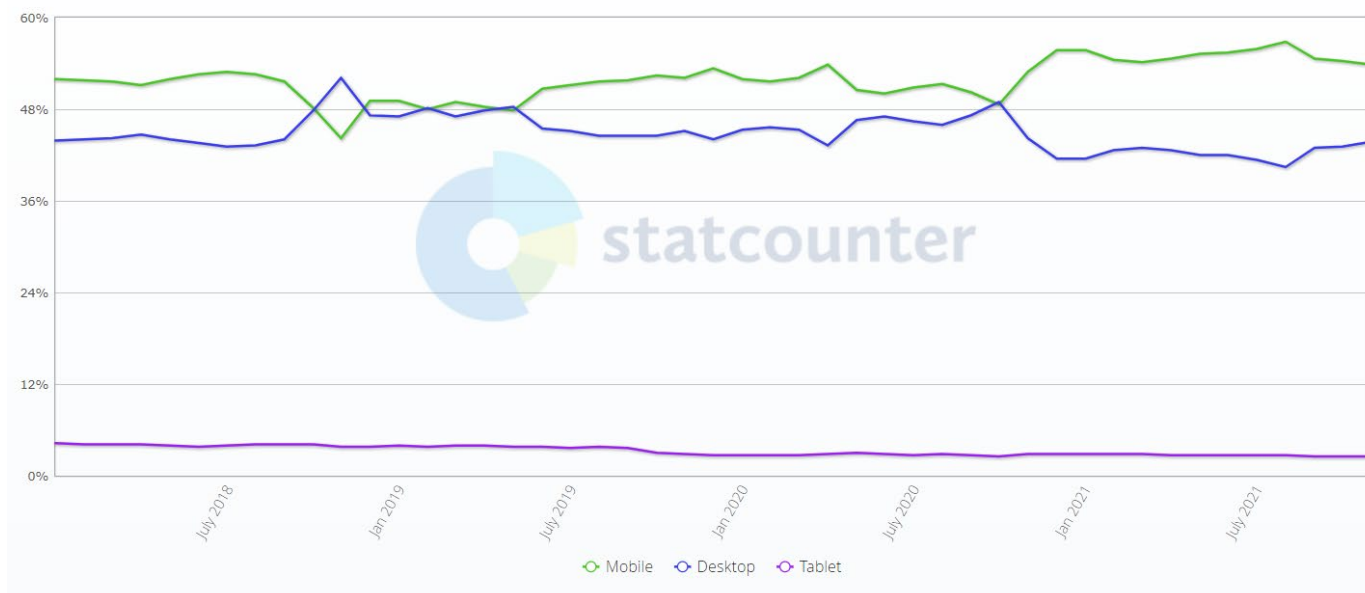
Wearables have reached around 40% penetration in the UK and US and the total installed base of IoT devices is set to reach more than **30 Bn units globally by 2025** delivering a **market value of more than \$5 Tn by 2030** – though the Apple Glass we predicted may have a big impact has apparently been pushed back to 2023 (potentially to go straight to virtual retinal display (though patents linked to in articles claiming this seem to link to an inter-device encryption patent, and I've not been able to find the VRD patent).



Working from home, as predicted, has continued to impact mobile and desktop use – though it has returned pretty much to pre-pandemic trend (even somewhat accelerated) globally, in the UK the huge boom in WFH seems to have at least played a part in maintaining the relevance of the desktop experience.

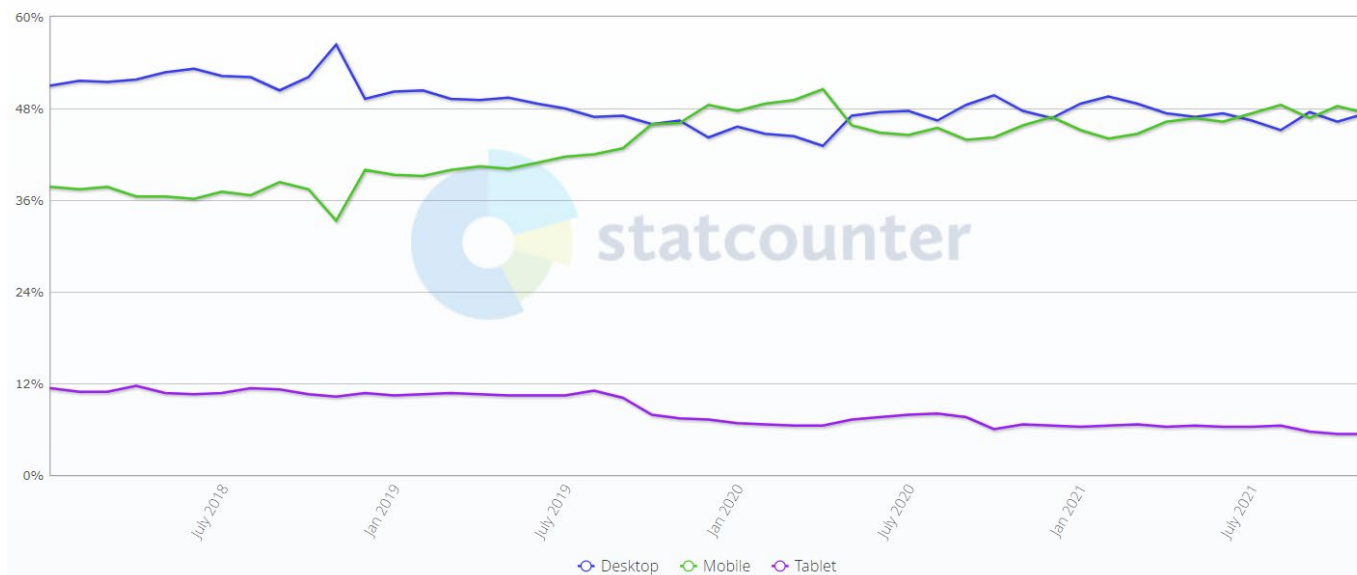
Desktop vs Mobile vs Tablet Market Share Worldwide

Jan 2018 - Nov 2021



Desktop vs Mobile vs Tablet Market Share United Kingdom

Jan 2018 - Nov 2021



Equally, the rapid growth in eCommerce has, as predicted, maintained much of its captured market share in the UK, and reached around a third of all retail spend in the first months of 2021 – and while it dropped off as the UK fully reopened, it has yet to return to the upward trend line it had followed throughout the last decade, meaning that brands will be competing in much more competitive online spaces from now on than prior to the pandemic.

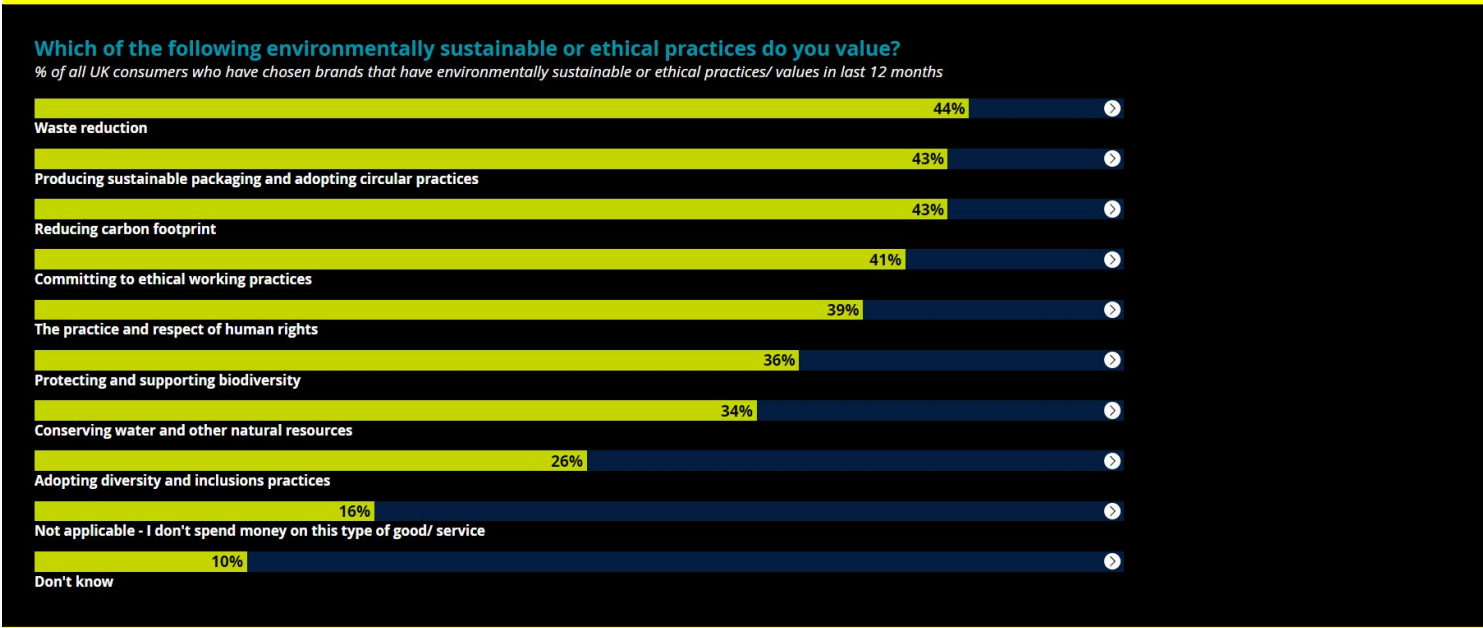


PREDICTIONS

While some of last year's predictions and trends will continue impact brands over the coming years, these are the interesting industry wide developments to watch out for in the next year.

The increased awareness of climate issues, while perhaps long overdue, has begun to gradually impact the behaviour of brands and consumers – brands like Microsoft, Google, Logitech, Sky and others have been carbon neutral for some time, but as dissatisfaction with ‘greenwash’ grows and attitudes change, we’d expect to see an increase in brands looking to reduce their carbon footprint, become carbon neutral and use green credentials in advertising and marketing collateral.

ECO-COMMERCE



Although, historically, brands have often trumpeted these credentials with more gusto than they deserved, research from Deloitte shows that, in the UK at least, there is a large and growing market of consumers for whom ethical and eco-friendly practices are important in a business (even if we insist on contributing to Jeff Bezos’ almost-space flights).

As such, we’d expect a noticeable increase in brands making their ethical and eco-friendly practices clear to consumers – both in B2C and B2B sectors. While we doubt that not advertising your practices will reduce performance, the ‘green boost’ in profitability **has been well documented for years** – with brands increasing sales, decreasing waste, improving employee retention and more as a result of ‘going green’.



NEXT STEPS FOR OMNI-CHANNEL RETAIL

While full realisation of omnichannel retail is some way off (McKinsey Group, for example, **predict around the 2030 mark**), there were baby-steps taken in 2021 with various 'shoppable content' events such as the TikTok concert featuring Ellese and brand ambassador Zara Larsson. As the retail market has developed and begun to include digital options from eCommerce to social commerce, it has also become fragmented – it will unfortunately be down to retailers to join these dots, though there are SaaS platforms claiming to offer at least partial solutions.

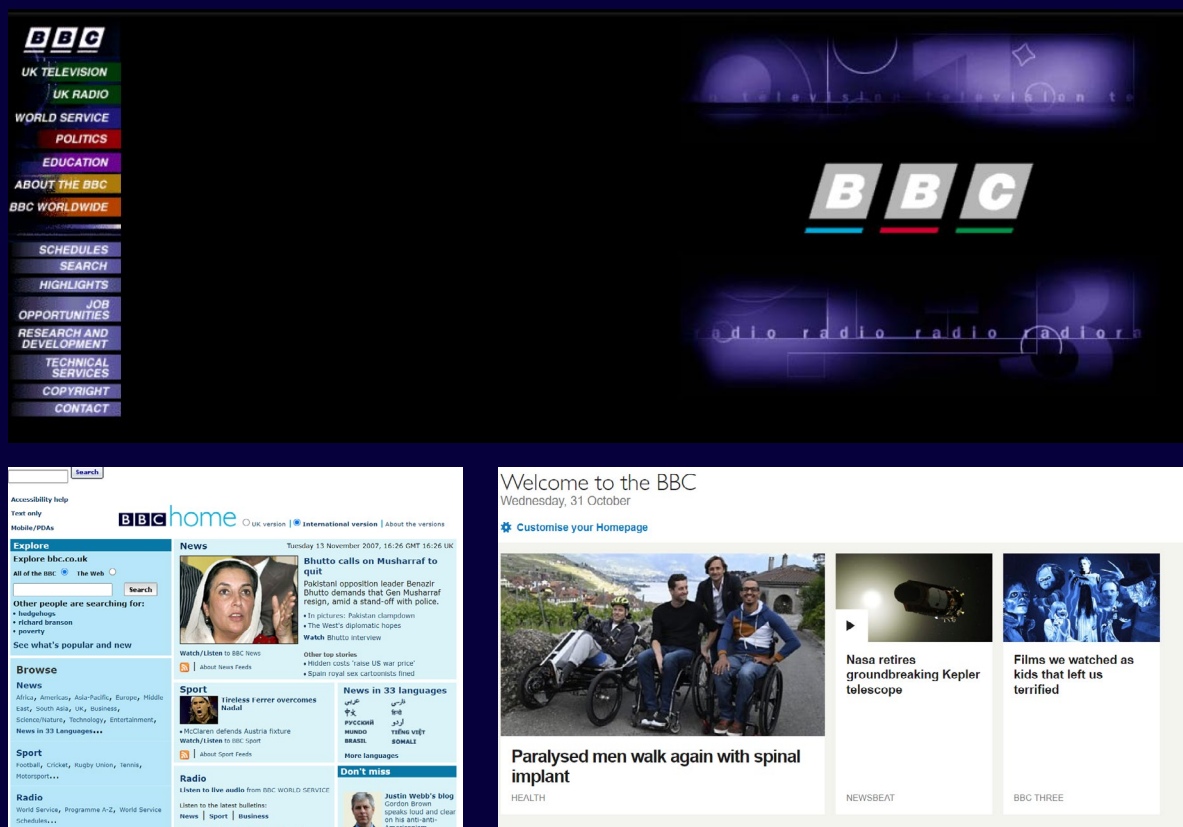
To see where we're headed, it makes sense to check out one of the largest retail holidays in one of the largest nations on the planet, and this Single's

Day saw Chinese consumers offered a huge variety of **purchase options and sales tools**. Not only is Single's Day likely to continue its growth outside of China, the developments are an indication of what's to come. While we may not see every technique prove a hit, the fact that experiments are being undertaken on a globally important day for international brands should prove how seriously omnichannel is being taken.

As a result, we'd expect to see greater efforts by retail brands to begin building omnichannel presences that allow users to feel connected to the brand, and able to purchase from the brand, wherever they happen to be online.

CHANGING THE FEEL OF THE WEB

Sad though we are to admit it, We've been present for each mainstream iteration of the internet – from the bulletin boards and text only sites to the eyewatering flash monsters and onward to the cleaner, sleeker sites popular at the moment – but there's sufficient reason to believe that there's another change in the overall look and feel of the web on the way.



Although, while researching this particular suspicion, We came across an article from 2007 claiming that the web had found its look (We won't link to it for decency's sake), websites have changed considerably over the last few decades – and it isn't finished.

There will be plenty of articles (there always are) that claim to know how the latest trends will end up, and those that say the website is dead, but – in the words of Percy Shelley, nought is mutable but mutability. The only thing we can really be assured of is that we really have no idea. The progress of fashion in web design moves more slowly than in other domains because of the complexity of making changes. However, because a website is increasingly the primary concern for many brands, added to the increased speed of 5G and the improved ease of many CMSs, we're likely to see a gathering pace.

“Thought is mutable but mutability...”

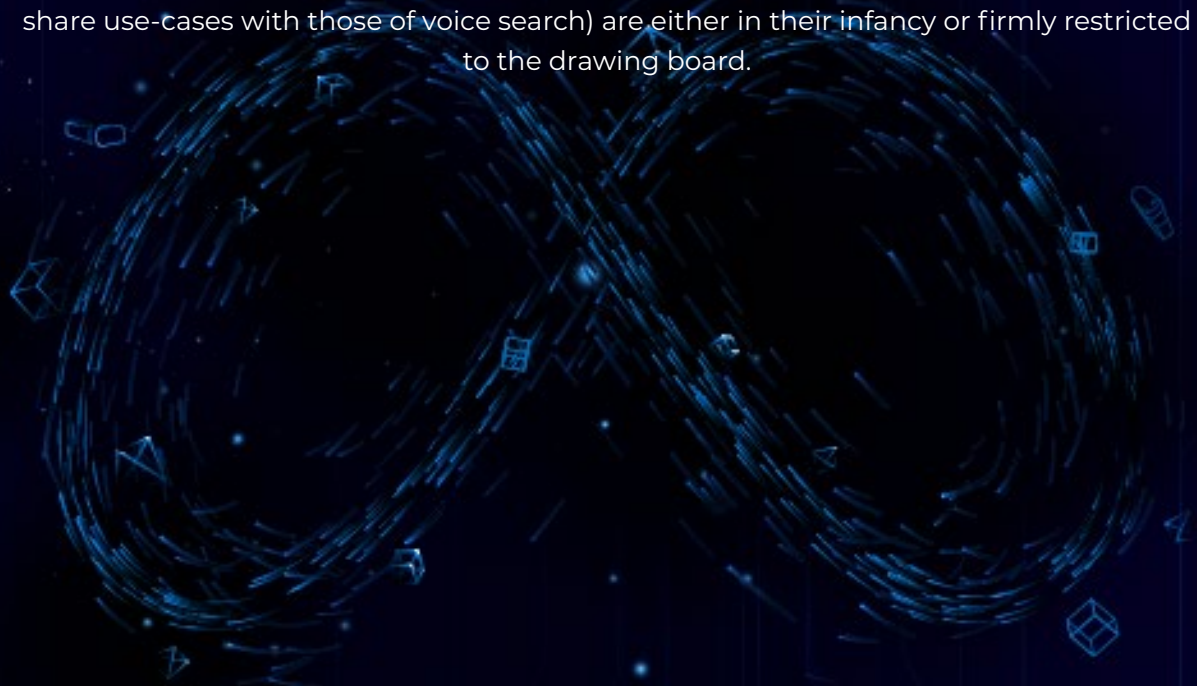
The importance of accessibility – unfortunately a secondary concern for much of the history of the internet – has begun to finally push itself to the forefront, while access to the internet in developing nations and across demographics means there are large and growing lists of needs to accommodate. These changes have already started to alter the feel of websites subtly over the last couple of years, but this can be expected to accelerate over the next year or two.

While we can't offer the blueprint to build the future of the web, we can advise brands looking to relaunch their online presence to do so with changeability in mind. It should be possible for brands to change the look and feel of their site without lengthy consultations and build times. Brands will need to ensure that they are demanding the ability to alter the core of the website with as little fuss as possible, allowing them to be agile as the next big thing emerges from the noise.

THE LACK OF A METAVERSE

Now that the industry has stopped telling me that voice search is imminent (leaving me now shaking my head in despair at the proliferation of articles telling me it never will be), we can expect the metaverse to be front and centre of marketing grifters worldwide (I just checked, the crypto-bros are already at it) – and 2022 will see the rise and fall of plenty of metaverse endeavours.

As with voice search, marketers have seen a shiny thing and misjudged its proximity – thanks in no small part to Zuckerberg's rushed PR exercise in firefighting. However, the technology required for a functioning and marketable metaverse (many of which will share use-cases with those of voice search) are either in their infancy or firmly restricted to the drawing board.



There will be plenty of claims about the metaverse (as there are about AI, which are almost always machine learning), but while some of them may provide novel marketing opportunities, most will be little more than Second Life with better graphics (remember when that was the future?). As such, the vast majority of money spent by brands on metaverse projects (that aren't directly in technology or brand building), will likely be wasted.

This may seem a strange prediction so soon after hyping omnichannel retail, but while omnichannel is a fairly vague term describing a solid vision of the future of retail, and one that has the pieces of the puzzle almost in place to begin making a difference, the metaverse is a solid term for a vague vision of a future that is presently almost entirely vapourware. For this reason, we'd advise marketers to carefully examine any proposal that features the word 'metaverse' and to think carefully about any investment therein.

Search Engine Optimisation

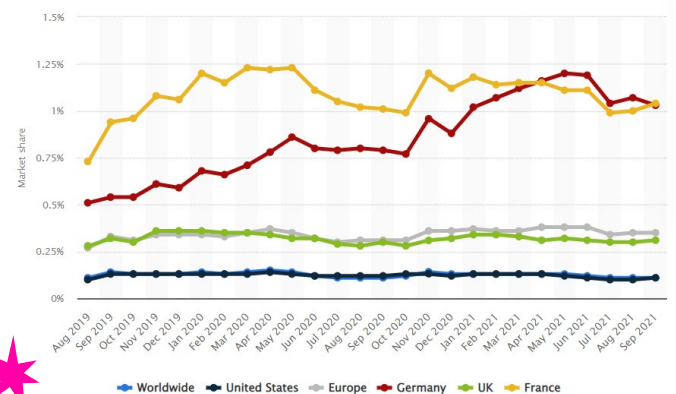
REFLECTIONS

It may not have taken a crystal ball to predict the trends that were going to make a big splash in the world of SEO last year – there was the looming, pre-announced Core Web Vitals update, after all, but we were right to predict minimal initial change from the update, as Google continues to shepherd webmasters toward the future they expect.

This is the case, too, for the predictions on the need to pay more attention to Google competitors – while the changes were not significant enough to cause waves, Google's global market share has remained at around the 86% mark, but between improvements to aspects of Bing search as well as ethical, environmental and privacy concerns addressed by Bing powered search engines such as DuckDuckGo and Ecosia, there have been fairly large increases in the queries made outside of the Google ecosphere:



DuckDuckGo queries over time (Source: DuckDuckGo)



Ecosia share of search market (Source: Statista)

The other trends we paid special attention to included automation and semantic/structured data – both of which made a noticeable impact over the course of 2021, but will also continue to impact the world of search and SEO in 2022 and beyond.





PREDICTIONS

SEO is in the middle of a shift – the power of Google, and tech firms more generally, has caused a huge amount of attention to fall on the conduct and performance of the platforms. This means that, in addition to commercial objectives, Google is also juggling the need to prove itself a fair and trustworthy pillar of global capitalism. This means that we are expecting ‘the same but more so’ making up a large part of the trends to look out for in 2022.

A LEAP IN COMPREHENSION



David Gossage
SEO Manager

Google is getting a better at understanding content and judging intent, and the differences between informational and transactional search intent. This, combined with the growing understanding that the author of an article is more than just a name on a page, is indicative that Google's judgement of quality will increasingly depend upon algorithmic 'understanding' of both content and its authors.

This prediction gets to the heart of a number of the changes that are the core of a shift in how search operates. As Google has come under pressure over misinformation and radicalisation both in search results and on YouTube, there has been a huge increase in the major, seemingly 'quality' or 'EAT' related updates (both announced core and those tweaks inferred from volatility). Combined with other quality adjacent updates – such as the October link spam update – 2021 has been a year where Google has really pushed hard to improve the SERPs.

We'd expect this to continue throughout 2022 – the various NLP models that have been deployed are unlikely to be the last, and there is no sign that work is slowing to improve the 'knowledge graph' that plays such a huge part in modern search and in the presentation of search results. As we move through 2022, we can expect to see at least two or three named updates with quality as a focus, and we'll also hear more at Google I/O about the latest in transformer innovation.

Necessary actions for 2022

Whether through structured data, linking or any other method of your choice, you will need to focus on properly defining the entities that exist on your pages. As we've said before, Google may be getting better at NLP and understanding, but it's far from perfect and any help you can provide will help your brand to succeed in search.

In addition, expertise can be better presented if presented by an expert – so begin making the most of the experts at your disposal and start to craft the knowledge graph of core employees. There's an excellent podcast by knowledge graph enthusiast Jason Barnard (available wherever you find your podcasts) which covers elements of this fairly often. Brands and agencies alike will need to put aside concerns about elevating employees and help them to cultivate their personal brand by establishing them as expert entities.

A UX REVOLUTION?



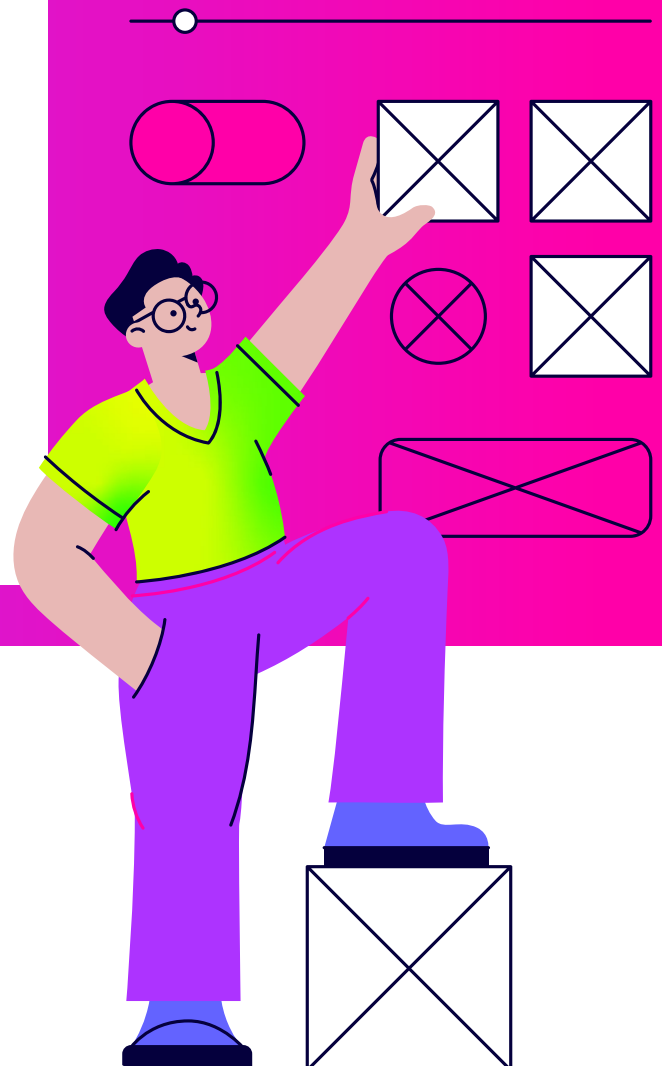
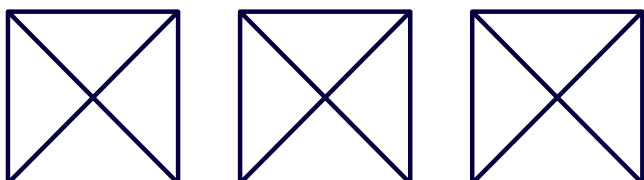
Andrew Whyman

Senior Organic Search Executive

2022 will see a continued push for a more streamlined/optimised browsing experience. Websites have become so complicated with different technologies that they are almost applications in their own right. This causes significant bloat, contributes to slowdowns and is something that contributes to poor user experience. Google is continuing to introduce more metrics for core web vitals, and I don't expect that to stop; we'll likely see at least two more key core web vitals metrics to focus on over the course of 2022.

This is a really interesting one – the last time I heard a similar prediction was with native apps, when it was proposed that due to various issues with the useability of the mobile web, brands would need to develop native apps. Now, however, beyond social media, banking and gaming, apps seem to be a thing of the past – with the average user interacting with, on average (according to Statista) 9 apps per day, but only 30 per month.

However, this prediction works in the opposite direction – the advances in web technology, from the overall speed of delivery to Service Workers, Progressive Web Apps, and advances in various code bases should have combined to deliver a richer, faster user experience. However, due to the slow progress of corporate websites and (as mentioned in the industry trends section) the difficulty of wholesale change, many large websites have become bloated mishmashes of new and legacy code and technology which is damaging performance and UX.



Necessary actions for 2022

Core web vitals, as well as various content and quality focused updates may well be the straw that breaks the camel's back as far as various legacy sites are concerned. Brands should consider the new year an opportunity to invest in updating their web presence to bring it in line with modern user expectations and Google's requirements.

As Google increases pressure on brands to deliver a better experience, and as the general appearance of the web shifts to meet user expectations and fashion, the new year should include a major rethink from many brands operating legacy websites.

SOONER RATHER THAN LATER FOR G4



Alan Reeves

Director of Search

It may seem obvious, but Google will continue to develop GA4. However, as humans are naturally resistant to change, a lot of businesses will hang on to GA3 until the bitter end. However, new features are likely to only be available in GA4, so early adopters in 2022 will have an advantage.



This is a really important point – and I know I'm guilty of hesitancy regarding the shift to GA4, but as Google Ads shows, when Google decides the time is right, you can quickly find your favourite features deprecated. As such, brands (and me) should spend more time getting comfortable with GA4 in order to make the change a seamless one. There are plenty of features on offer that are worth investigating and as GA4 can operate alongside Universal Analytics with minimal (but not without any) impact on performance, it may be beneficial to run both in tandem for a while until GA4 becomes as intuitive as UA for those that use it. As things stand, the GAIQ exam still deals with UA, so for onboarding purposes it's worth noting that it may cause confusion if the difference isn't understood.

Necessary actions for 2022

At the very least, brands should look to use 2022 as a period of transition and look at how the new platform will change how their reporting functions and what they will need to address to be prepared for an eventual move to GA4. This will allow you to start collecting data immediately for new functions and reports while facilitating training. There aren't often clear chances to get ahead of the competition, but this is certainly one of them.

Paid Media

REFLECTIONS

There was movement toward the end of cookies, but while Google did indeed look to federated learning, as we predicted, the EU was less than convinced that it complied with GDPR rules, so much of what we were expecting to happen has been a can kicked firmly down the road. Nevertheless, there has been a lot of ink spilled about the need to move to collecting first party data – and we'd recommend this going forward.

As for automation – our testing here at Click Consult has shown that Smart Bidding consistently outperforms previous manual campaigns, so there were reasons to be cheerful. This makes predicting paid media trends somewhat tricky when it comes to search, as the lack of transparency from the largest platform provides little to go on. Still – our Head of Paid Media has some advice to offer:



Will Dixon

Head of Paid Media

Audience Based targeting is going to be key, match types are becoming more blurred and making sure you're showing at the correct query time for both the search intent and user journey is going to be more important. This will likely also involve leaving behind the segmentation of old (Device, Match Type etc.) as performance is more likely to be improved by consolidating campaigns and focusing on the above Audience element of targeting.

TARGETING AND THE END OF SEGMENTATION

While this ties in with the increased prevalence of smart bidding and various automation increases in Google Ads, audience targeting is also likely the result of whatever GDPR compliant version of federated learning that Google eventually uses to replace cookies. For that reason, not only is it a good plan in the short-term to overcome issues with match types, but also in preparation for the likely future of targeting in general.

Necessary actions for 2022

The next year is going to require a lot of general busy work with Google Ads accounts – there are a lot of changes coming and a lot of gradual shifts that have happened over the last year that will require account audits and testing of new processes. For this reason, we'd recommend brands undertake a full audit of their Google Ads accounts as soon as possible to make sure you're ready for the year ahead.



Will Dixon

Head of Paid Media

With RSA being the main ad type by the middle of year, building these out and testing/reviewing combinations will be key to a successful 2022.

RSA BUILD OUT

With Google set to end expanded text ads, brands will need to ensure that they have RSA ads and ad groups ready to go (or already in place) before the roll out. While they will still be eligible for auctions, it's likely that RSAs will receive a bump for relevance and performance, making it harder for ETAs to compete.

While this is yet another top-down change from Google, the early reports on RSA performance are good, so there's reason to be optimistic about performance. Nevertheless, it will require adjustments to how accounts are managed.

Necessary actions for 2022

We'll be putting together a thorough walkthrough on these in the next month or so, but for the time being, the following is what you'll need to do in the short term:

- **Fill all headlines and description slots**
- **Monitor ad strength and optimise on an ongoing basis.**
- **Maintain focus on relevance**
- **Refresh your ads regularly**

REFLECTIONS

Beyond that, the theme of nostalgia in marketing was certainly highly useful in a year of **Friends and Fresh Prince reunions**, and despite various disasters, climate catastrophe and an ongoing pandemic, optimistic marketing also played its part – partially to cater to a rising consumer optimism about returns to normal, partly to encourage the economy.



PREDICTIONS



2022 saw Clubhouse hype hit fever pitch as downloads hit more than 30 Mn, but as the numbers dropped from 500,000 daily to around 100,000 by the end of the year, it has been quickly forgotten by a lot of people that predicted it to be the wave of the future. In actual fact, there can only really be one 'winner' of social media in 2021 – TikTok. The platform used momentum gathered during 2020 to propel itself past the billion-active-user mark faster than any social platform to date.

Combined with its quick capitalisation on social-selling and social-commerce, and its direct line to a hard-to-reach demographic, the platform is likely to receive a lot of attention from brands – meaning that there'll be a lot of what my children refer to as 'cringe' cropping up among the few brands that will take the time to properly understand the platform.

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR YOUTUBE?

While YouTube remains the second most used social platform, it has not received much coverage as a social media platform over the last few years (presumably because of its horrifyingly toxic comment culture), but the addition of short clips and the success of TikTok is likely to push Alphabet to increase the number of social and TikTok-like features over the coming year. This may not work – similar to Facebook's continuous 'borrowing' of Snapchat features – but they're likely to see YouTube re-emerge as a social media platform.



Andrew Smith
Marketing Director

TikTok will climb the list of the top ten social media platforms and get bigger for businesses.

TIKTOKIFICATION

On the topic of TikTok, it's reasonable to assume that it will be a top five social platform (including WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, TikTok tends to rank around 7th for monthly active users at the moment). They have, as mentioned, shown a rapid and savvy commitment to growing their business offering, so there'll almost certainly be big steps taken throughout the year ahead.

Necessary actions for 2022

Honestly, this will require some serious thinking from brands – it's not enough to just make an account and start posting the same old content. Brands will need to assess whether their tone of voice is consistent with expectations – and whether they're prepared to stretch guidelines to fit the medium. As ever, marketers love shiny things, so there'll be a temptation to jump in, but in the interests of not poisoning the well, real research should be conducted.

Necessary actions for 2022

As with all advice for YouTube – concentrate on quality. Whether it's branded content or pre-roll advertising, quality is incredibly important. There are so many high-quality videos produced by teenagers that the average, underfunded business video looks even worse by comparison. So for brands looking to build communities on a newly social YouTube, consider doing more by doing less.



Andrew Smith
Marketing Director

YouTube will be rediscovered as a social medium due to video becoming popular at increasing engagement across all social channels.



Andrew Smith
Marketing Director

LinkedIn will should be the main social destination for B2B brands in 2022. Whether local, regional, or global, this is the platform for organisations of all sizes to showcase their thought leadership. LinkedIn is upping its game for analytic insights, too, meaning it will be useful and measurable.

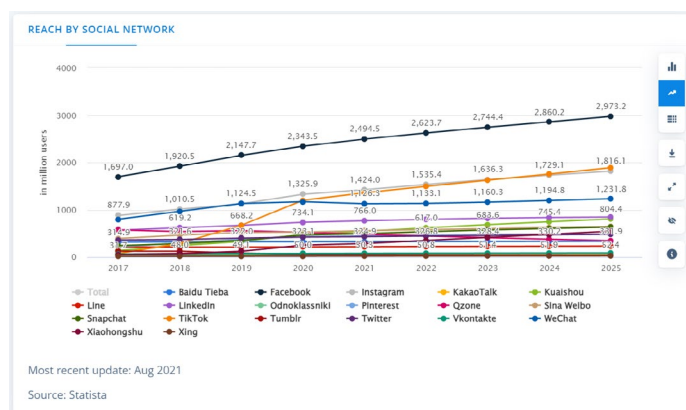
A LOT OF LOVE FOR LINKEDIN?

Since its purchase by Microsoft in 2016, LinkedIn has added a swathe of new features and functions for businesses, freelancers and for recruitment. This includes creator mode, new analytics, live video, and a growing Gen-Z audience.

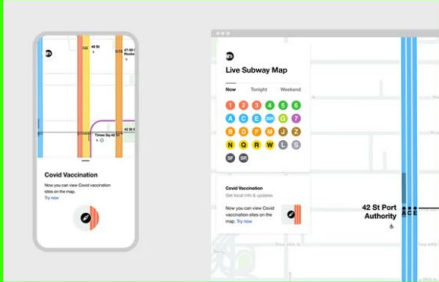
LinkedIn has, despite this and despite placing 7th for reach, failed to really achieve centre-stage – meaning that while LinkedIn ads are more expensive than social media more broadly, there may be ample room for brands to excel on the platform.

Necessary actions for 2022

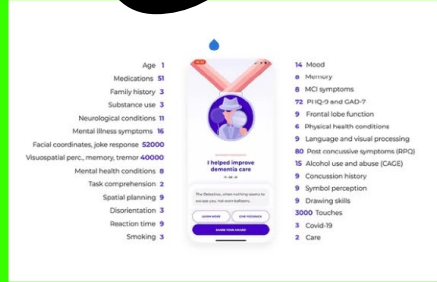
Experimentation is key throughout 2022 – with much social spending, whether on ads or organic social. However, for B2B brands, LinkedIn should be at the forefront of thinking.



Design



Interaction Design



Best use of Data



Social Media and Content



REFLECTIONS

From 3D and cartoonish to nature inspired design, all of last year's major trends were represented at the various global design awards throughout 2021. While it's easy for people outside of the specific design teams and departments to miss such

trends, successful brands will – whether intentionally or not – find themselves capturing the zeitgeist in their design. After all, it's not designers that decide which types of design will capture attention, but the public.



PREDICTIONS

As with 2021, design will be looking to address the unique condition we have found ourselves in the previous year and the desires that arise from them. Just as last year's lockdowns saw people bring the outdoors in, the designs of 2022 will need to address a yearning for the long-awaited return to normal, it will use developments in technology and improved mobile performance and, as ever, will look to capture the way consumers feel to inspire connection and engagement.

MAXIMALISM



Dave Ashworth,
Head of Design

Maximalism, will be the buzzword for 2022, so we'd expect to see a lot of high-contrast and punchy design. Think big, in your face graphics and the use of bright, vibrant colours. Pastels and understatement seem to have had their day.

As mentioned, the job of design is to tap into the way people are feeling, and after a couple of years of social, personal and financial restriction, it's understandable to see a desire for flamboyancy. The roaring 20s followed hot on the heels of the First World War (1914-18) and the Spanish Flu pandemic (1918-20), for example, while the Hippie movement emerged from the socially conservative 1950s. It's no big stretch, therefore, to predict a revival of bold colours and designs in the wake of a restrictive period of global significance.

NECESSARY ACTIONS FOR 2022

This ties in with predictions from a number of teams – there are likely going to be shifts in the look and feel of the web over the next couple of years and design will be at the core of whether brands deal with these trends well. A refresh which doesn't touch the consumer as they expect, or which communicates the wrong things about a brand can be counter-productive.

This doesn't mean that everyone will need to jump on each trend – established brands will almost always see greater success with minor deviations from a core branding strategy, but there will be opportunities for newer businesses to unlock hidden potential through design.





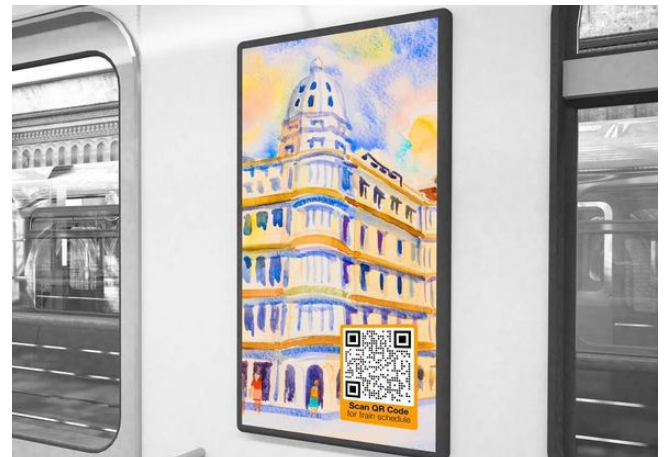
Dave Ashworth,
Head of Design

One thing about spending two years logging your attendance at every location and avoiding touching everything is that it has made QR codes almost second nature to people. While hyped originally, QR codes had all but died on the vine by 2019, but this reconditioning may be the thing to save it – and we foresee a surge in QR code innovation for packaging, out-of-doors and even digital design throughout 2022.

QR CODES

I always quite liked QR codes – so I'm perhaps biased in backing a prediction that they could achieve their early promise. I would be surprised if we don't see QR codes enter the retail space – activating branded AR experiences, for example, like sampling and demonstrations, animation or mini-entertainment offerings such as games and video.

The resurrection of the QR code could, in fact, be ideally timed – coinciding as it might with a level of technology far more able to make it a rich experience than when they first appeared. However, I've been wrong about QR codes before, so I'll be watching with interest.



Necessary actions for 2022

There are plenty of innovative brands offering a variety of services around the QR code, so brands without the inhouse expertise may want to see if there are third-parties that can help bring branding to life and add a bit of creative flare to outdoor and digital campaigns using QR codes.

POETRY *in* MOTION



Dave Ashworth,
Head of Design

Motion graphics will play a larger role in image heavy campaigns.

While it's impossible to say for certain, I think, there is a proven psychological link between fear and the craving of the familiar, so as the world begins to recover from a collective period of generalised anxiety disorder, 2022 may well see a rise in desire for novelty and a departure from the tried and true. In order to capture this feeling, brands will need to present novel experiences in their marketing – and a shift from static to moving graphics could well play a part in this.

Necessary actions for 2022

As with all of the design predictions, there is a need to test and test again – by allowing creativity in a way which retains measurability, it is possible for brands to dip their toes in the water of emerging trends and follow the data to ensure the best outcomes.

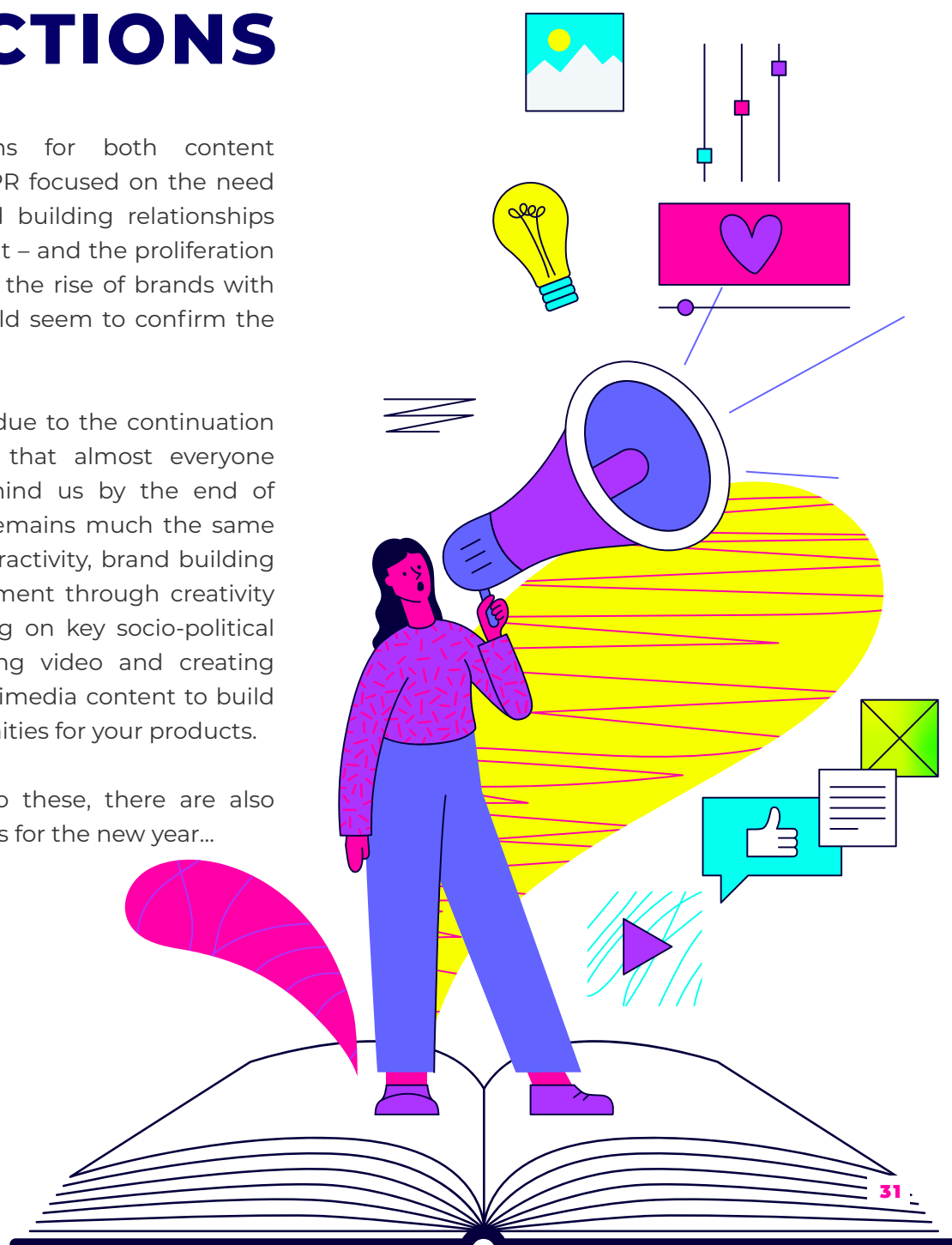
Content Marketing & Digital PR

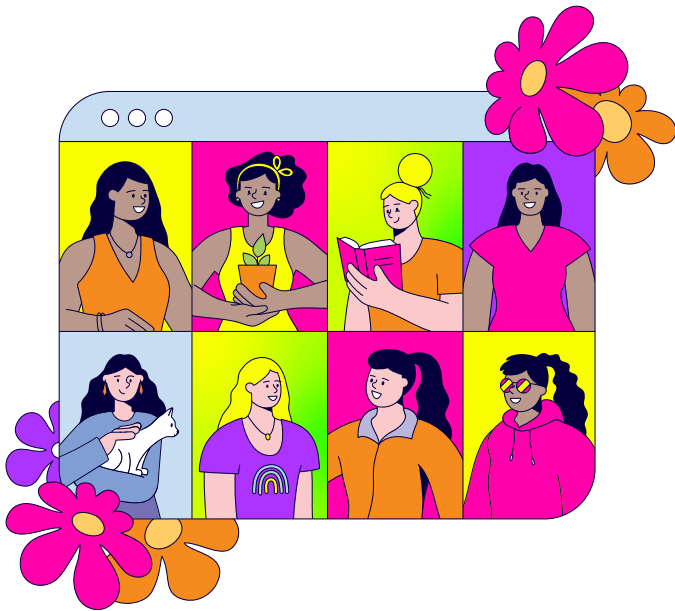
REFLECTIONS

Last year's predictions for both content marketing and digital PR focused on the need for brand building and building relationships through creative content – and the proliferation of UGC campaigns and the rise of brands with unique personality would seem to confirm the truth of these.

However, in large part due to the continuation of a turbulent period that almost everyone thought would be behind us by the end of 2021, the prescription remains much the same for 2022 – focus on interactivity, brand building and consumer engagement through creativity and through positioning on key socio-political moments. Keep pushing video and creating unique and useful multimedia content to build audiences and communities for your products.

However, in addition to these, there are also some unique predictions for the new year...





This is something I've been talking about at conferences for a little while now – the value of links will increasingly come from relevance to subject matter (sitewide) rather than any specific authority score. Whether this has reached a tipping point, I don't know, but it should certainly be playing on the minds of influencers and brands alike throughout 2022.

As various search algorithms get better at understanding both pages and websites, they're going to be able to better judge the relevance of outbound and inbound links. This is unlikely to see the return of link penalties, but it will see the value of many links re-evaluated in the coming years and, therefore, the beginning of the end for a long running link building technique focused on various authority scores.

Necessary actions for 2022

Relevance should always be key, but as it becomes judgable by algorithms it should worry a lot of brands that have placed it some way below authority score in importance to a campaign. Campaigns should aim to build their campaigns around earning relevant links rather than a quantity of links.

INFLUENCERS WILL NEED TO PROVE THEMSELVES



Sophie Edwards,
Head of Campaign Outreach

In terms of outreach, bloggers, influencers and creators will be looking to remain competitive as there is much conversation over their relevance in today's off page SEO strategies. In order to remain competitive, they will be looking to improve the content experience to attract users by creating highly visual posts that share trustworthy information.

Of course, social media and blogging go hand in hand and many influencers look to be moving away from traditional blogging to create social content, and as businesses look to collaborate with trustworthy nano influencers to help personalise their brand many influencers focus will be on affiliate marketing and partnerships across social channels.

INCLUSIVITY



Karen Campbell,
Head of Copy

As gender inclusivity becomes a higher priority for brands, there will be a greater emphasis on gender-neutral marketing. User personas will become more diverse to reflect transgender and non-binary audiences, and there will be a stronger emphasis on using gender-inclusive language across all content types.

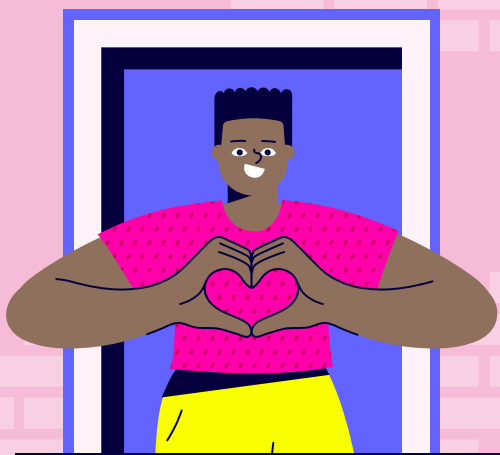
Monzo Bank made great strides with this throughout 2021, but while it has always generated some backlash from vice-signalling corners of the internet, it is clear that important sections of the population expect the brands they buy from to reflect how they feel about social issues – and younger generations are far more accepting of the LGBTQI+ community and, as Gen Z enters the workplace and the C-Suite, and becomes a more and more important demographic to the economy, we can expect brands to shift their marketing to reflect their consumers and their attitudes.

While it may be incredibly cynical, there is research that suggests the quest for the 'pink pound' led to strides in the movement for gay equality, so it may be that the social impact of capitalism may be positive (to some extent and for a given value of positive) when it comes to matters of inclusion. Here's hoping!



Necessary actions for 2022

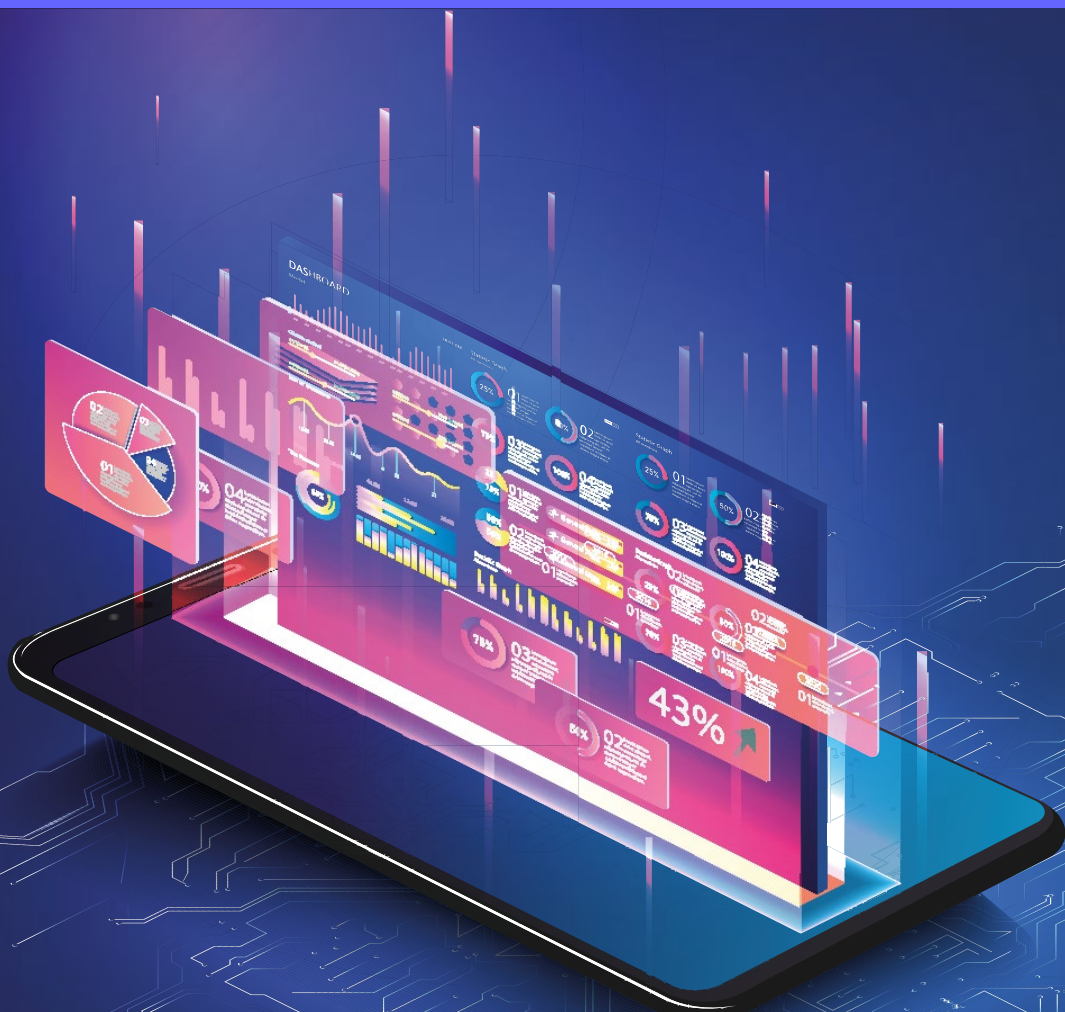
Be an advocate. Be an ally. Avoid performative gestures if they are not backed by actual progress within your brand and its practices. There is a huge need – especially in the UK – for gender to become less of a fringe issue and for an effort to be made in advocating for the rights of trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people. Perhaps brands can be central to that and a force for change.



FINAL THOUGHTS

As with 2021, the coming year is trickier than usual to make definitive predictions for – there's a lot going on in the broader social, political and apocalyptic spheres that can influence which of these trends will hit home and which will seem hilariously absurd, but while looking in to the future is an inexact science, we're confident that we'll be there or there about by this time next year (cue arrival of an Independence Day style mothership over the Click offices).

One thing you can be sure of, however, is that we'll be keeping our audience up-to-date as the year goes on, and we hope we'll be able to offer some insightful content to help them stay ahead of the curve. For now, though, we hope everyone that reads this far will have a successful 2022 and that we've been able to get the proverbial cogs turning.



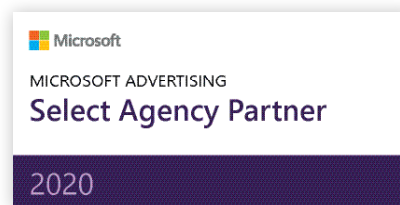
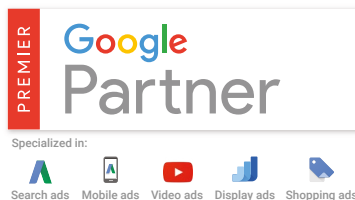
ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning search & digital marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, social media and analytics. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named both SEO Agency of the Year and Organic Search (SEO) Team of the Year 2020; ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, and a Microsoft Advertising Select Agency Partner.

OUR ACCREDITATIONS



HOW CAN WE HELP?

Find out what an award-winning search agency can do you for your brand.

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