

# MOST CONTAGIOUS REPORT 2020



# In this report you'll find:

**A ~~fond~~ farewell to 2020 /**

**The insights and strategy behind B&Q's Build a Life Campaign  
(created by our Most Contagious Agency of the Year, Uncommon London) /**

**4 Contagious trends /**

**The 25 Most Contagious Campaigns, 2020 /**

**Contagious quotes of the year /**

**A word from Oriel Davis-Lyons, founder of the ONE School /**

**Why Ben & Jerry's is the Contagious Brand of the Year /**

Welcome to the  
**MOST  
CONTAGIOUS  
REPORT  
2020**

Thank God that's over.

2020 was tough for a lot of brands. Maybe you didn't have it as tough as a company called Contagious, whose mascot was someone wearing a hazmat suit, and whose tagline was 'Have you got it yet?...' but tough, all the same.

In retrospect, it's possible to look at *Parasite* winning the Best Picture award at the Oscars in February as something of a warning shot. It's director, Bong Joon-ho, has talked about why, despite it being a Korean film, people all over the world reacted in the same way. His conclusion is that, 'There is no borderline between countries now because we all live in the same country. It's called capitalism.' It seems very fitting for a film about social inequality and wealth disparity to win in 2020, given what the rest of the year had in store for us.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, billionaires in the US increased their total net worth by over \$600bn. During the same period, 40 million Americans filed for unemployment, while 700,000 people in the UK were driven into poverty. This gulf has been a long time in the making. Over the last 40 years, CEO pay has increased by 1,007.5% while employees' pay grew just 11.9%, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

And although the lockdown spawned plenty of 'nature is healing' memes, the reality is quite the opposite. In September, the WWF, reported that wildlife populations are in 'catastrophic decline' and that nature is being destroyed by humans at a rate never seen before.

The Doomsday Clock now stands at just 100 seconds to midnight, 20 seconds closer than in 2019, which – let's remind ourselves – was not a brilliant year for the environment. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

says that we are ‘closer to apocalypse than ever’ before. To be honest, for most of the year, it felt like it.

But we also saw some rays of light in changes to the capitalist system that directly affect the environment. In February, CNBC’s *Mad Money* host, Jim Cramer, told people to ditch their investments in fossil fuels saying, ‘The honest truth is I don’t think I can help you make money in the oil and gas stocks anymore.’

Whether it was the environment, wealth inequality, race inequality, social inequality, health inequality, or gender inequality, 2020 seemed to unrelentingly highlight just how broken the system was for many people.

The quote that kept popping into my head throughout the year wasn’t from some social activist, but the ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus.

In the face of constant suffering and needless death, Epicurus enquired into the nature of God and is credited with asking: ‘Is he willing to prevent evil but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able but not willing? Then he is malevolent.’ It’s a simple but incisive challenge that can be applied to both billionaires and brands.

And because malevolent and impotent aren’t the terms you want people associating with your brand, it’s unsurprising that we saw so many brands feel compelled to take a stand across a variety of issues.

Following the protests that spread around the world in the wake of George Floyd’s killing, we saw Ben & Jerry’s put out a blunt message that We Must Dismantle White Supremacy. In June, Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian stepped down from his position on the board of the company to create a space for a black board member, stating, ‘I believe resignation can actually be an act of leadership from people in power right now.’

On the social welfare front, we saw McDonald’s offer a million free meals to children from low-income families in the UK when the government refused to provide them. On the climate front, we saw Patagonia encouraging people to vote out climate-denying politicians by stitching a hidden message into its clothing.

Again and again, we saw brands stepping up – whether it was as activists or just to make hand sanitiser, celebrate health workers, act as educators and personal trainers, or to encourage people to stay at home.

Whether you were a retailer struggling to meet overwhelming demand or an airline with no people to fly, 2020 was a year that caught a lot of companies napping and forced everyone to react. All those good intentions that have been on the back burner for too long: what you were going to do about diversity, or about your impact on the environment, or your working from home policies, or your digital transformation, or your online customer experience. The crises of 2020 brought it all to a head and asked two sharp questions:

Why do you really exist? And what are you going to do about everything that’s going on around you?

Interestingly, these are questions that the world asks of businesses every year – it just normally asks them quietly and politely. This year, it shouted.

The companies and people that knew their purpose answered quickly and decisively. But if you were left mumbling ‘I don’t really know’ to both those questions then, sure, enjoy the fact that 2020 is finally over. But just be prepared with some better answers by the time 2021 gets under way.

Alex Jenkins, Editorial Director

**‘There was one part of the brief that was really awesome... It said, “When everybody else is bringing the violin, we’re going to bring the banjo.”’**

# Brand of the Year: Ben & Jerry's

2020 was a stress test for brands that claim a purpose beyond profit, and Ben & Jerry's did not waver, writes Chris Barth

**Y**ou can hardly click around an advertising publication these days without bumping into some scoffing thought-leader jabbing a stick at brand purpose, imploring advertisers to wake up and smell the reality that we exist to sell things to people and the sooner we can get that through our thick heads the better. They typically include a hypothetical straw man meant to reveal the idiocy of the concept: 'I don't give a shit what my ice cream thinks about racial justice!'

Ben & Jerry's would like a word. The brand (which by the way paced the US ice cream sector last year with \$681m in sales, according to market research firm IRI) is firmly rooted and brashly outspoken on myriad issues that would get the 'brand purpose' red stamp from your typical armchair analyst. 'What does ice cream have to do with structural racism and social justice?' CEO Matthew McCarthy asked himself at a forum in 2019. 'Not a lot, except that we care about it and our team cares about it.' Quite frankly, the ice cream brand doesn't really give a shit if you think its progressive positioning sells more pints or not.

'To be clear, this isn't cause-related marketing,' said Chris Miller, Ben & Jerry's activism manager (yes, that's his title), speaking at the University of Vermont in 2016. 'Cause-related marketing typically starts with the company thinking to themselves, "Who are my customers? What do they care about? And how do I design an emotional way to talk to them about that issue?" What we are talking about here is something very different [...] It starts with – as a business, as employees of a company – what are the things we care about? What's the change we seek to see in the world? And how can we design campaigns that engage fans and consumers around that issue?'

Ben & Jerry's has been following that model since its 1978 founding in a renovated gas station in Burlington, Vermont. The company preaches 'linked prosperity' from an economic, social and product perspective, for anyone even marginally connected to the business – 'suppliers, employees, farmers, franchisees, customers and neighbours alike'. In the early years the brand put aside 7.5% of pre-tax profits annually in a charitable foundation,



capped executive pay at five times the lowest entry level salary, and launched a community-based IPO decades before BrewDog declared it punk. It has long advocated for transparency in ingredient sourcing and labelling in the food industry. It was clamouring for climate change awareness well before the topic went mainstream. And more recently it has been ahead of the CSR zeitgeist as a vocal proponent of LGBT equality, prison reform, racial justice and refugee rights.

Unlike what the naysayers may claim, these aren't faddish marketing ploys – they

are long-term commitments attached to action that give Ben & Jerry's clarity of perspective. Never was this clearer than June 2020, when a Minneapolis police officer killed a black man by kneeling on his neck for nine minutes. While other brands, already struggling to find their rudder amidst the swirling sea of Covid-19, issued toothless statements, Ben & Jerry's pulled no punches, saying: 'We Must Dismantle White Supremacy' and sharing policy recommendations and tangible ways people could take action. In a year that had many on the back foot, searching for direction or scrambling to institute diversity initiatives, an ice cream brand was ready to lead.

Now, it's time for others to follow. There's more to marketing than selling more things to people, no matter what the so-called experts say, and Ben & Jerry's has proven its thesis of linked prosperity. As Ben & Jerry's co-founder Ben Cohen put it in 2011: 'A company can be responsible in terms of the environment, it can be proactive in terms of solving problems, and it can make money at the same time. That's what we should expect from all corporations.' Sounds pretty sweet to us. 🍌

# ‘We Are Missing Out on so Much Talent’

Oriel Davis-Lyons explains how his ONE School is helping to solve the advertising industry’s diversity problem

I didn’t have a ‘traditional’ journey into advertising. I left school without qualifications and later attempts at college were just as unsuccessful. After spending a few years working as a chef I returned to college (because the fifth time’s a charm) and I stumbled across advertising. At first it was just a way to fill out my schedule but it quickly replaced journalism as the thing I wanted to do. It just so happened there was an evening portfolio course about to start. I applied, got in and 12 weeks later, I had a portfolio full of bad print ads, a couple of rough sketches for apps and a TV script my tutor had told me to ‘burn and forget you

ever wrote’. But it was enough. I got a placement at a small indie shop, worked my ass off and somehow made a career for myself.

I was lucky to find a way into the industry that didn’t require putting down a huge chunk of money or time. I didn’t have either. Just like the thousands of young creatives who have been locked out of the ad industry because of barriers that we’ve constructed, maintained and encouraged.

The top ad schools in the US can cost up to \$40,000 for a two-year programme. So when even the act of putting a portfolio together requires those kinds of resources and privilege, is it any wonder



our creative departments are so lacking in diversity. How many young, talented creatives of colour look at the cost and don’t even click ‘Learn More’?

We are missing out on so much talent. Talent that is so obviously there. It’s on TikTok, creating the dances and challenges we spend months trying to convince clients to join in on. It’s in bedrooms making music that months later we’re negotiating rights to use in a spot. It’s driving fashion, art and culture. Yet, it never seems to find its way into the creative department.

That’s why I started ONE School. The first online portfolio school for black crea-

tives. I wanted to create an alternative way into the industry that isn’t reliant on how much you can pay. One that recognises raw creative talent first and foremost. But ONE School is also an attempt to address the imbalance of an industry that benefits so much from black culture but has so few black people in the room when our culture is being discussed.

We’re just getting started and our first graduates will join the industry in February. I hope it’s shown that if we in the industry apply our creativity to solving our own diversity problems, we can make systemic change and benefit from the untapped talent we’ve overlooked for too long. 🌈

# The Strategy Behind B&Q's Build A Life Campaign

Uncommon's Build a Life campaign for B&Q invigorated a functional brand by finding the emotion in DIY. It exemplified the progressive and distinctive work that the agency produced throughout the year for its clients, and which convinced us to name Uncommon as our first Agency of the Year. Here's the strategy behind that campaign

**W**hen London-based agency Uncommon won the B&Q account in December last year, the 50-year-old DIY and home improvement chain had one thing in mind. How can B&Q get its mojo back?

With other players eyeing up the home improvement space – from plant specialists like Patch, to incumbents like Homebase and Wickes – B&Q was struggling to stand out, despite being the market leader. Its sales and awareness were solid, but brand health measures were in decline.

As a leading DIY retailer, it was important for B&Q to dig into the true meaning of 'home improvement', and this shift in think-

ing inspired a more emotional approach. In September this year, Uncommon launched Build a Life, a nationwide campaign rooted in the belief that anyone can change their home to make life better. At the heart of the campaign is a film made up of real home videos taken by 69 families from every city in the UK. Narrated by *Game of Thrones* actor Rory McCann, it reminds viewers that 'you don't buy a life, you build one', and ends with B&Q's famous tagline, 'You can do it'.

Shortly after, a series of large-scale billboards in major cities appeared around the UK; 17 individually designed executions reflecting key moments and how home improvement can shape them, each



blending B&Q's classic orange with statements inspired by life at home. Phrases like 'First kiss', 'Good tired' and 'Disaster averted' are evocative of family life and speak to the true impact of the changes people make to improve their homes.

To find out more about what inspired the change in tone for the DIY retailer, and how it came to reflect the mood of the UK post-lockdown, we spoke to Uncommon's head of planning, Tobey Duncan, who gave us his take on how to create emotional ads authentically and with relevance.

## What was your initial response to the brief?

'We need to get people feeling differently about this brand.' The big leap for us and B&Q – and I actually don't think this was a big leap for consumers – was just to reconnect B&Q with what home

improvement and DIY means. The thing that was really obvious to us is that all the competition talks about this industry as a category of chores: you're fixing broken things; your house is against you and your house is inadequate. But if you spend any time actually talking to people about DIY, you find out that it's not about fixing stuff at all. It's about creating stuff. It's about changing things. We just thought that was incredibly powerful and wanted to build the brand around that very sentiment.

As the number one DIY retailer, B&Q can really stand for the transformational power of DIY. This really helped the tone of the campaign come to life. We wanted Build a Life to tap into the fundamental truths about our homes and reflect the role B&Q has played in transforming the UK's homes for the past 50 years. It would have been easy for that message to sound patronising or overstated.

## How did you ensure this emotional tone would come across as authentic, coming from a home improvement retailer?

There was this massive disconnect between the way the category would talk about DIY, and the way real people would talk about it at home. So while it seems like a radical departure from the category, I think we've just moved much closer to what consumers view and see. So many people in this country have been going to B&Q shops and doing their home improvement through B&Q. Reconnecting the brand with that didn't seem like a massive overreach, and hopefully it hasn't come across as one.

I think if we were making something up

– like if we had gone, 'We want people to see DIY like this, we don't think anyone sees it like that at the moment, but we want people to start seeing it like that' – that might have been a bit more nerve-racking. But given we weren't making something up, that we were just paying tribute to the way people saw DIY and capturing that truth, I think we just wanted to be quite respectful and honest about it.

## What inspired you to use home videos?

We were super mindful that we were going to come out and make a claim about people's lives – it felt right to do that in the most authentic manner. Capturing real-life moments, and using

real people's archive footage to represent a genuine portrait of British homes and how they have been improved across the years felt like the most truthful representation of our idea. There was a casting partner who connected us with a real home from every city in the UK. Each family would share their film archives of family and home life videos. We digitised them – and that still exists as a key resource. The idea of making our production bigger than just a way to generate ads, but almost developing an archive which then would allow us, throughout the year, to create things that could be of real cultural interest was something we got excited about. The hope is to create more ads out of that collection next year, but also make

something a little more remarkable, like a short-form documentary for example.

## Was it planning or luck that made this campaign chime so well with the mood of the UK post-pandemic?

We were concerned talking about home, being nostalgic – evoking the past might even have been a tricky thing. So, it's lovely that it has felt more relevant maybe now as a consequence of that stuff. But there's also some lucky coincidence as well. There were definitely conversations about whether the opposite might happen – whether home footage might be too familiar after Covid-19, or whether people wouldn't want to think about the past or home, because we're in a really different relationship with all those things at the moment.

## Can you outline the thinking behind the media plan?

There's social and digital running alongside [the film and outdoor], but for us it was really important our film and OOH embodied the new purpose boldly. We wanted the brand to say its message with pride – we didn't want it hidden on an Instagram feed, or drip-fed across media over many months. We wanted big definitive launch moments, so massive poster sites across the UK and 60-second TV spots were the way to go. The idea is that this will then be followed by more targeted campaigns this year and next.



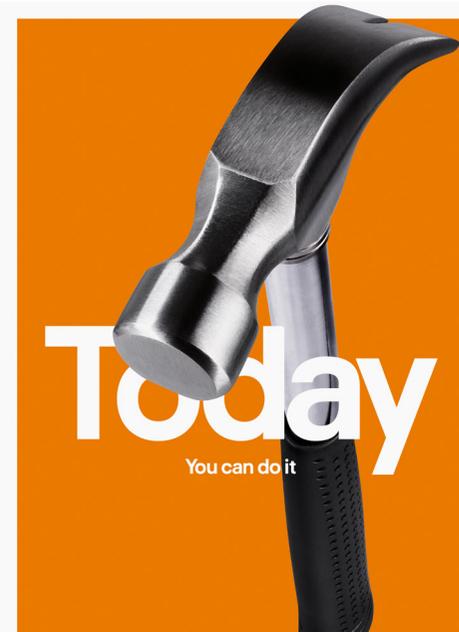
Was there a need to balance staying true to B&Q's iconic assets while trying out a different tone?

There were some amazing existing assets to play with – the recognisable orange brand colour and the line 'You can do it'. We felt that these were important to honour and fully embrace in the new campaign. 'You can do it' has never been a more powerful thought. The idea that you can build a room, a house, a life. We didn't want to give B&Q another end line, we just wanted to clarify what we were talking about. So, 'You can do it' became 'You can create a life and a home and the things that you want in this world'.

We were trying to be more loyal to how people think about the brand than the B&Q ads of the past. I think there is a real fondness for B&Q and stitching it into a story about the nation and how we see ourselves didn't feel like a massive over-reach. The brand has maybe oscillated a little bit as to what it's about creatively, but within the business, there is a real clear sense of direction.

Were there any specific challenges you had to overcome?

Like every other business, B&Q was navigating their way through the lockdown restrictions, not knowing whether they were going to have increased demand or less demand and what staffing challenges may arise. A lot of our conversa-



tions were dominated by the unknown and how best we could launch this campaign in these new times. We were also actually a little worried that other brands were going to have a similar stylistic approach – making work with found footage – due to the lack of shooting opportunities caused by the initial lockdown restriction around production.

Have you got any sense of how people have engaged with the campaign?

Not enough to pat ourselves on the back yet, but we've been really encouraged by the response internally at B&Q. They are a massive employer and they're really keen to share all this stuff and bring every employee on the journey. Anecdotally and on Twitter, we've had some really positive feedback from consumers and the industry – which is always nice to see so soon after a launch.

The thing that really struck me about this campaign process is, if you look at the advertising around DIY, you get one really specific view of it – it's all about chores. But if you speak to people, the stuff they are trying to achieve is so much more interesting and profound. I was just blown away by how personal these stories are. When you look at a category that's never really spoken about the power of home, but is so connected to it, that was a really amazing opportunity for B&Q.

# Our philosophy at Contagious is simple: to be the best you need to learn from the best.

Most Contagious is meticulously curated to equip you with the knowledge to create better, braver work. No panels, no filler, no pointless celebrities – just an interrogation of the year's most vital trends, technologies and campaigns across a day of insight-packed talks. Join us live and steal a march on 2021.

For more information and tickets click the links below:



**MOST** 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021  
**CONTAGIOUS**  
USA  
[CLICK HERE](#)

A black rectangular banner with a large, stylized pink graphic on the left side. The text is white and black, providing details for the "Most Contagious USA" event on January 27th, 2021, with a pink "CLICK HERE" link at the bottom.

**MOST** 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021  
**CONTAGIOUS**  
APAC  
[CLICK HERE](#)

A black rectangular banner with a large, stylized pink graphic on the left side. The text is white and black, providing details for the "Most Contagious APAC" event on February 24th, 2021, with a pink "CLICK HERE" link at the bottom.

**‘Brand purpose, easily dismissed as an abstract concept, has been one of the most useful strategy tools during the crisis. It’s the interface through which business can help and serve the public. Brands that know their place in the world know how to act. Purpose unlocks bold moves.’**

# Brave New Normal

Five creative experience trends for 2021 and beyond,  
by Pats McDonald, chief solutions officer, dentsu creative

It's tempting to see 2020 as a story of polarisation.

Yet in many ways it has been a story of radical collaboration. Faced with unprecedented problems, businesses came together as never before.

As we locked down, we were forced to open up to new possibilities. As our physical worlds became anxious and constrained, virtual experiences were charged with emotion. Able to touch less, we found ways to feel more.

Perhaps more than anything, we learned that it's difficult to predict what the future holds...

Are we destined for a future where avatars roam virtual landscapes, where we wear digital make-up and collect digital sneakers? Or will we yearn for the homespun and the handmade; embracing cottagecore trends and a circular economy?

The most likely – and interesting – answer is both. For every action, there



will be an equal and opposite reaction. Where extraordinary things happen is when we resist binary thinking and bring those opposites together.

Remote farms sell their produce over

live stream and validate it over blockchain. Fresh creative voices are funded using cryptocurrency. The future of work is being imagined in the here-and-now of gaming as we make real connections through virtual personas.

Our Brave New Normal report explores five themes that will coexist, combine and recombine to shape the future of creativity and technology.

## 1 The Virtual Experience Economy

Accelerated by the pandemic and enabled by 5G, we will see a dramatic increase in virtual products and experiences. Unrestrained by the physical space, we will reimagine what a concert, conference, class or even product can be. How much would you pay for virtual couture?

## 2 The Real We

In parallel, we will see a powerful desire for simplicity and authenticity. Front line workers, farmers and activists are our new heroes. A new commercial model is emerging rooted in direct, disintermediated relationships between creators and the communities they serve.

## 3 Human Contact-less

As contactless technologies make stores less human, online commerce will become more social and more personal, powered by next-generation live-streaming platforms.

Get ready for a 'QVC for Generation Z' to reimagine stores as studios and staff as entertainers.

## 4 Me, Myself and AI

Amidst the pandemic, personal health data became public property. In a future where Alexa can diagnose a cold, cars can identify distracted drivers and our bank accounts can track our carbon footprint, we expect an ongoing tension between privacy, personal wellbeing and public interest.

## 5 The Urgency of Allyship

Alongside individual wellbeing, as social inequalities widened and the Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum, we saw new-found urgency around brands as a force for social good. Going forward, we will see brands step up as allies in driving structural and systemic change.

As we look to the future, it is only by bringing together truly diverse teams and talents that we will position ourselves to thrive. It is only when we resist polarisation and bring together craft and code, game designers and diversity champions, virtual reality and emotional impact that we will create a truly brave and brilliant future.

To read more, download, *Brave New Normal: dentsu creative trends 2021* [here](#).

# Divide and Conquer?

Brand activism is becoming more frequent and more intense. James Swift looks at what the academic research has to say about if and how it works

**O**ne theory of brand activism is that it's a byproduct of the hyperconnected world in which we now live.

The internet was more or less built to amplify brands and with great power comes great responsibility. In this case, the responsibility to act as moral arbiters.

Another theory links brand activism to failing government. In part because brands have been compelled to step up and perform their civic duty, but also because polarising politics has made activists of the masses, and brands hate to sit out a trend.

Whatever the reason, brand activism is becoming more frequent and more intense. But it's effects are not well understood. We looked at the emerging body of academic research to see what we could learn about if, how and when brand activism works.

## **The value in values**

Professors Sourjo Mukherjee and Niek Althuisen created five experiments to test how people's attitudes towards brands changed after learning their stance on issues like immigration, abortion and free speech.

The results showed an asymmetric effect: when brands took a stand that people didn't like, attitudes worsened, but when people agreed with a brand's activist message, their attitudes didn't improve.

It turns out 'consumers already expect the brand to follow what they perceive as the "right" moral behaviour', say the researchers.

But the punishment for brands that transgressed was real. In the experiments, not only did participants claim they liked the offending brands less, they refused freebies from them and



declined to post positive news stories about the brands on social media in return for cash.

The only time this asymmetric dynamic changed was when a brand came under attack for its stance. In the face of backlash, supporters rallied behind the beleaguered brand. But even then, support only rose from non-existent to tepid.

If this was the final word on brand activism, you'd have to conclude it was a mug's game.

But it was not the final word. Professor Chris Hydock of Georgetown University and a team of researchers also looked at how activist stances on divisive issues

affected which brands people choose. Like Mukherjee and Althuisen, Hydock's research revealed brand activism was beset by a negativity bias. But it also showed that a still-significant number of people responded positively when brands aligned with their own values, to the extent that they were willing to sacrifice price and product quality to make a purchase that reinforced their identity.

Hydock's conclusion was that brands with smaller market shares can benefit from activist marketing, because the pool of uncaptured customers who agree with its stance is larger than the pool of misaligned existing customers it will lose.

## All about alignment

Real-world data on the effects of brand activism was provided by Yashoda Bhagwat, assistant professor of marketing at Texas Christian University, and her team, who looked at 293 instances of corporate activism from 149 US firms between 2011 and 2016.

They measured how corporate political advocacy affected brands' sales and share price, and found that, most of the time, brands that dabbled in politics suffered negative abnormal stock returns.

But deeper analysis showed that the problem was not brand activism per se, it was poorly aligned attempts at it.

Investors will get behind brand activism when it aligns with the values of employees and customers. And customers like it, too. In fact, says Bhagwat, customers 'pay attention to and make long-lasting purchase decisions' based on a brand's sociopolitical messages.

'On average, well-aligned activism boosts a stock price by approximately 1% and sales by approximately 10%,' writes Joshua Beck, one of the co-authors of the study, in an article for *The Conversation*. 'Misaligned activism lowered a stock price by over 2% and reduced sales by over 4%.'

There's no small amount of irony to finding that the key to successful brand activism – which by definition means addressing divisive topics – is alignment. But there's no way around it, either.



## Moral cues

The final angle from which to explore brand activism is that of the cause itself. PhD student Andrew Edelblum showed participants in his experiment social media posts advocating a divisive cause, either from a brand or the proponents of the cause itself.

So, one group (hypothetically) might see a post from Adidas urging people to support Planned Parenthood, while another would see a post directly from Planned Parenthood. Participants were then asked how they'd divide

a \$10 reward between themselves and the cause.

The experiment was replicated eight times with 1,890 participants, and every time the same thing happened. People who saw a post from a brand they identified with gave 30% more than those who saw messages from the cause itself. Meanwhile, people who saw a message from a brand they did not identify with gave between 25% and 30% less.

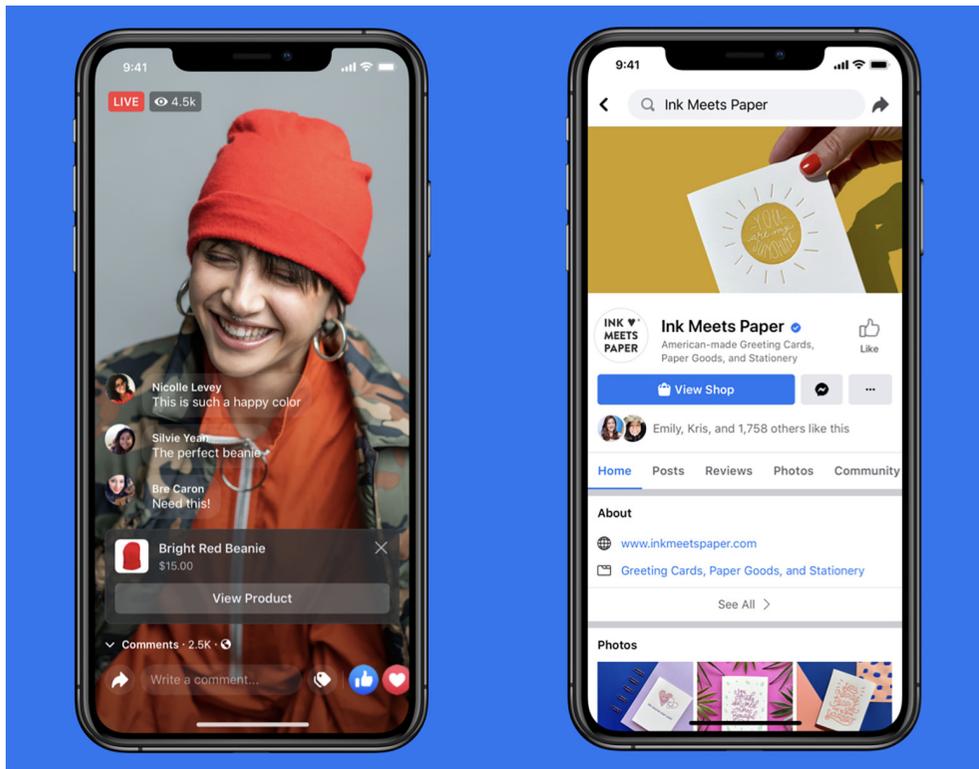
According to Edelblum, his research shows 'brands actually can exert moral cues', but there was a limit to the effect.

It only worked when people already supported the cause being advocated.

The same finding echoes through almost all the research we have seen. Brand activism, like all advertising, appears to be a weak persuasive force. But if you understand the principles of how it works you can still harness it to good effect. Brands might not be able to change minds but there's plenty of evidence that they can make issues (and people's thoughts on those issues) more salient. And maybe that's enough. ✨

# Social Shopping

Online shopping has increased dramatically during the coronavirus pandemic, but it's not the only disruptive retail trend in play, says Amelia Markham



**E**arly in the pandemic, Best Buy called the coronavirus a 'relatively short-term disruption that does not impact our long-term strategy'.

A few months later, the electronics retailer had recorded its busiest ever period for ecommerce and announced it would adapt its business to accommodate shopping behaviours that CEO Corie Barry said have changed 'permanently'.

Ecommerce is expected to grow by 20% in the US this year alone, and according to IBM's US Retail Index Study the shift from physical to online shopping has been accelerated by five years as a result of the pandemic.

But while the dramatic shift to online shopping has stolen the headlines, there's another disruptive force that's about to change the retail landscape.

Mark Zuckerberg predicted in 2010 that social commerce – which he defined as selling through social media – would be the next thing to 'blow up'. A decade later, only 3% of all online sales in the US currently come via social, according to Bloomberg Business.

Now, thanks to the increase in online shopping, shifts in social media behaviours, changes in consumer preferences and investment from the platforms themselves, the scene is set for social shopping to fulfil the Facebook founder's expectations.

## Functional to fun

Until recently, social shopping meant little more than buttons that allow people to buy products without leaving a social media site or app. Now it's beginning to encompass online experiences that facilitate browsing and product discovery.

Brands are beginning to combine ecommerce with entertainment by offering interactive browsing experiences, from product demos and virtual try-ons to live chats and group buying.

The launch of Facebook Shops earlier this year – described by the company as a 'place to experience the joy of shopping versus the chore of buying' – exemplifies this change in emphasis.

## Going live

China is the world's largest social commerce market and, there, live streaming is a popular sales strategy that provides an opportunity for people to meet up, socialise and shop together online.

For shoppers this interactivity turns a transactional process into an enjoyable, engaging experience. And there's a benefit for brands, too. According to an academic study ('Does a companion always enhance the shopping experience?' by Adilson Borges et al) published in the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* in 2010, people shopping in groups buy more and spend more.

## Changing the game

But forward-thinking brands aren't just relying on features already offered by social networks. In March, Almacenes Éxito created a new platform for commerce by converting a mobile game into an opportunity to sell when it hacked the hugely popular Call of Duty:Mobile to give players the opportunity to hunt for their own discounts.

While the department store had to partner with gamer influencers to promote its offers in the ad-free app, platforms such as Scuti, which launched this year, may be about to (quite literally)

change the game. The marketplace is patent-pending but its tech will allow brands to sell and ship directly to video game players.

As shoppers seek new experiences we could see shopping – from browsing through to checkout – integrated into online content from gaming to video to streaming platforms.

## Bringing it back

What else does the future hold?

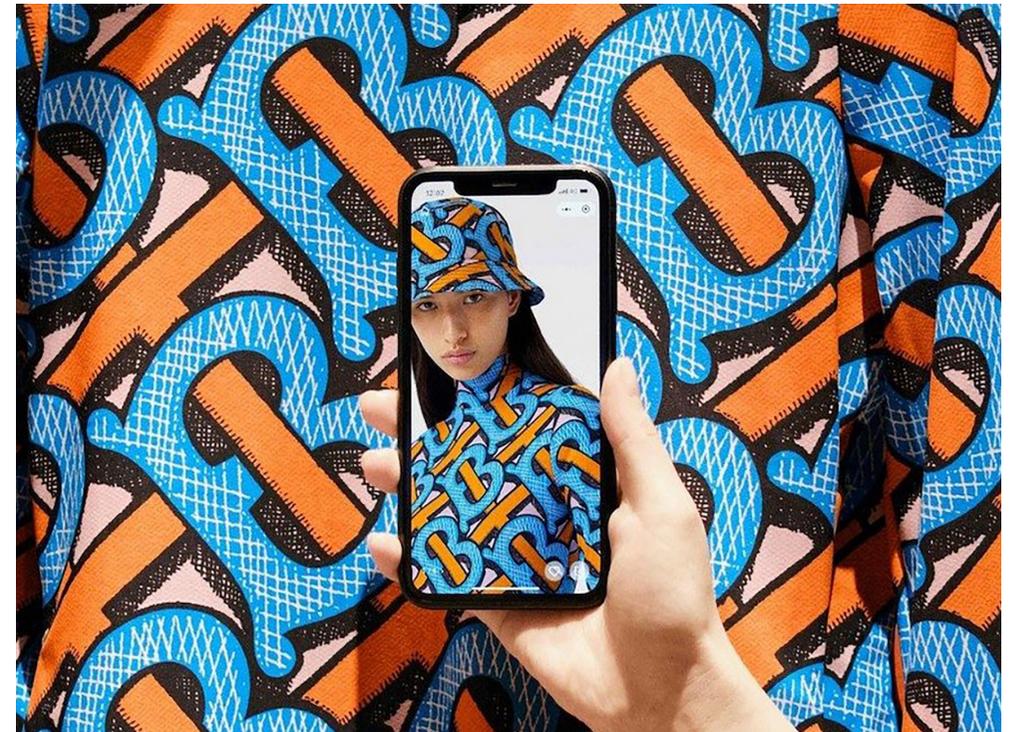
Again we should look to China and the 'New Retail' revolution. Brands have come full circle, first bringing

features of the in-store shopping experience online, then introducing digital functionality into physical retail spaces. In other words, while social commerce is simulating the in-store experience, it is also being used to enhance it. For instance, in Burberry's social retail store, which opened in Shenzhen, China, this year, shoppers can unlock experiences and exclusive rewards in the WeChat app by interacting with displays.

But despite this year's digital acceleration, a quarter of shoppers still find the experience of buying

online 'less satisfying' than visiting a physical store, according to Kantar's Covid-19 Barometer.

Brands should look to offer multi-media experiences and real-time buying opportunities to meet demand and drive adoption. And when in-store shopping rebounds (and especially if requirements for sanitisation and restrictions on socialising, touching and trying on items remain) brands should consider elements of the online experience that can be brought into physical retail spaces so that shopping – wherever it's done – can stay social. 





# Travel Revolution

OMD has released a research report looking into the implications and opportunities for technology to revolutionise travel

**T**he travel sector is facing challenges that have never been seen before. McKinsey estimates it won't recover to 2019 levels until 2024, and that's bad news. Tourism contributes approximately \$2.6 trillion to the global economy; from restaurant bookings, to car hire, to city tours and more, so it is crucial to expedite the sector's recovery.

Travel Revolution is a point-of-view on how brands in the travel sector can survive 'now' and thrive 'next', laying out technologies that will help rebuild consumer confidence and aid recovery.

Travel Revolution is the result of a three-year study surveying over 30,000 respondents across 13 global markets\*, 21 shopping categories and 65 future retail scenarios, to access the opportunities for AI to evolve commerce for consumers across multiple sectors.

The research tells us that three in five respondents already own and use AI weekly, and that booking taxis, ordering food and booking event tickets are the most common uses of 'voice'.

Looking further, we know that most visual searches are around travel touchpoints. For example, potential holiday-

makers looking for suggestions on where to vacation by searching an image of their perfect getaway. We also know that right now, interest in travel is fluctuating. In the summer we saw visits to travel websites in Germany exceed pre-Covid levels by 10%, with visits to booking.com exceeding pre-lockdown levels by 50%. However, in the US, where travel restrictions are more severe and consumers are more cautious, visits to travel sites are still down by 30%.

Travel Revolution acts upon these data signals to map consumer touchpoints against technology which will build trust, drive consumer confidence, and get vacationers travelling again. Here are five things that will drive growth.

## 1 Leveraging consumer data signals to lead with empathy

Travel brands aren't talking to the same people that they were pre-Covid – both literally and figuratively. It's time to reassess audiences to ensure you are addressing them with the right messaging at the right time and in the right way. If your audience cluster is nervous about travelling, you should be addressing their fears with realistic options and tangible solutions, not pushing ads for tourist hot-spots they're too nervous to consider.

## 2 Enabling contactless travel

Travellers want to feel safe. The less interaction they have with people who aren't in their immediate cir-

cle, the more comfortable they may feel. Add in contactless touchpoints – like room keys sent to smart devices, avatars greeting guests at hotels – and they'll feel more at ease.

## 3 Leaning into personalised, frictionless travel planning

Travel sites and travel aggregators already use a range of data to recommend travel solutions, but as AI's sophistication increases exponentially, travel purveyors are set to become more effective in their customisation. The reason is twofold. First, the exponential increase in the amount of data humans are generating on a second-by-second basis. Second, the maturation of AI algorithms and their ability to process that data.

## 4 Augmenting your travel reality

Automate and improve your collateral and assets using AI-driven tools. Are your banners voice-interactive? Can your product be illustrated and demonstrated beyond the image?

Perfect your operations: AI is less of a channel and more of a gateway into an existing experience. The quality of the 'destination' rather than the 'route' should draw the focus, so ask more questions about what lies behind and beyond the AI. Do your back-end operations work as they should? AI works as an augmentation, not a sticking plaster.

## 5 Being the picture that's worth a thousand searches

What if instead of keyword research, you did 'key image research'? What would your demo post images of? A picture of a Strawberry Daiquiri on a beach? Our understanding of consumer behaviour is about to become more and more sophisticated. Travel companies should ensure their own imagery and visual assets are polished, accurate and capable of being found by computer vision.

Two out of five respondents in our research said they'd be open to using image search to help book travel. EasyJet recently launched a feature designed to make 'your Instagram travel inspiration a reality', using a function within the easyJet app, Look & Book, to allow customers to upload an image, find out where the image was taken, and the availability of flights to that very destination.

Jean-Paul Edwards, chief product development officer at OMD EMEA: 'Based on our research, we're able to see holidaymakers are somewhat advanced when it comes to tech, with high adoption rates for visual search and voice. A good portion of people already use voice to book basic transport, such as getting a taxi to the airport. Travel consumers are also quite open to receiving holiday recommendations and inspiration with 37% saying they would be open to using Image Search to book travel. These are quite basic

interactions but, over time, reinforcing and expanding positive interactions could build trust and habituation, leading to a complete revolution in the way travel is planned, booked and experienced.'

Phil Rowley, futures director at OMD UK, adds: 'The innovations and transformation you will read about in the report, may seem distant, possibly far-fetched, but we predict they will arrive soon in some form or another. Like micro-evolution, you cannot view innovation close up; rather it can only be detected over time; an accretion of marginal gains and improvements. For every iPhone, there was a Palm Pilot. For every Tesla, there was a DeLorean. To steer that perfect path, you need to establish a guidance system. That means frameworks and processes that are geared to adapting to the inevitable change in increments and over time.'

The Travel Revolution will guide you on assessing consumer need-states, utilising data and machine learning, personalisation, and take you through a roadmap, from today and across the next 10 years, to ensure brands in the travel sector can survive 'now' and thrive 'next'.

*You can download your copy of [The Travel Revolution](#) [here](#).*

\* The 13 global markets surveyed were: UK, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Ireland, Greece, USA, Australia, KSA and India.

# The Great Reset

Economists and captains of industry agree that it's time for a new kind of capitalism. Smart brands are already figuring out what that looks like, says Patrick Jeffrey

**A**t a meeting in June hosted by The World Economic Forum, some of the globe's most powerful leaders met to discuss a radical new plan: The Great Reset of capitalism. The group – which included the chief economist of the IMF, the UN Secretary General and various multinational CEOs – believed the pandemic represented a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make wholesale changes to business.

Weeks later, US president-elect Joe Biden, echoed these sentiments at a rally in Delaware. 'It's way past time we put an end to the era of shareholder capitalism: the idea that the only responsibility a company has is with shareholders,' he said. 'That's simply not true. It's an absolute farce. They have a responsibility to their workers, their community, to their country.'

Biden's remarks capture the nuance behind the argument for a Great Reset. The world's leaders aren't declaring capitalism dead; they're calling for an end to Milton Friedman's vision of capitalism ('there is one and only one social



PHOTOGRAPH: ROM MATIBAG, UNSPLASH

responsibility of business... to increase its profits'), which has dominated since the 1970s.

## Extinct thinking

Given the extreme imbalance in society – which was exacerbated by the pandemic – it's easy to see why a new model of capitalism is attractive. In the US, as 40 million people filed for unemployment this year, the Nasdaq delivered record returns for shareholders. And as people across the country struggled to provide for their families, the wealth of US billionaires soared by over \$600bn.

In October the UN revealed the world had failed to meet a single target of the 2010 Aichi Biodiversity talks, which were put in place to stem the destruction of essential habitats. We also learnt that the 'Sixth Mass Extinction on Earth' is now accelerating faster than ever. In the next 20 years, 500 species of land animals are expected to disappear in what scientists are describing as a potential tipping point for the collapse of civilisation.

The public, too, feel the need for change. According to YouGov, only 9% of Britons want life to return to 'normal' after the pandemic. And a survey by OnePulse found that only 23% of the UK public believe advertisers should continue encouraging people to consume, fly and shop like they did pre-Covid.

Brands have a clear choice: remain on the runaway train of rampant capitalism, or get off, take stock, and change – fast.

## The fairest of them all

Those that want change should heed the advice of Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the IMF, who called for growth that leads to a 'greener, smarter, fairer world in the future' – something that we've already seen shrewd brands focus on in 2020.

When it comes to being 'fairer', the most contagious companies have ensured that all stakeholders – employees, customers and suppliers – have been supported through the most difficult year on record. When Chipotle was forced to close its restaurants, the burrito chain created a Virtual Farmers Market for its suppliers so they could trade online during lockdown. Similarly, when fashion brands cancelled £2.4bn of orders in March, UK fashion app Mallzee packaged items that would otherwise have gone to landfill and sold the 'Lost Boxes' to customers for a 50% discount – with proceeds going to support overseas workers.

'Smarter' brands have sought to create more sustainable ways of doing business. Ikea, for example, launched a 2020 Black Friday initiative with a difference, where the retailer offered to purchase people's unwanted Ikea furniture for up to 50% of the original sale price. The #BuyBackFriday initiative, by Edelman in London, reaffirmed the big box retailer's circular ambitions – as did the launch of Ikea's first ever secondhand store, in Stockholm, in November.

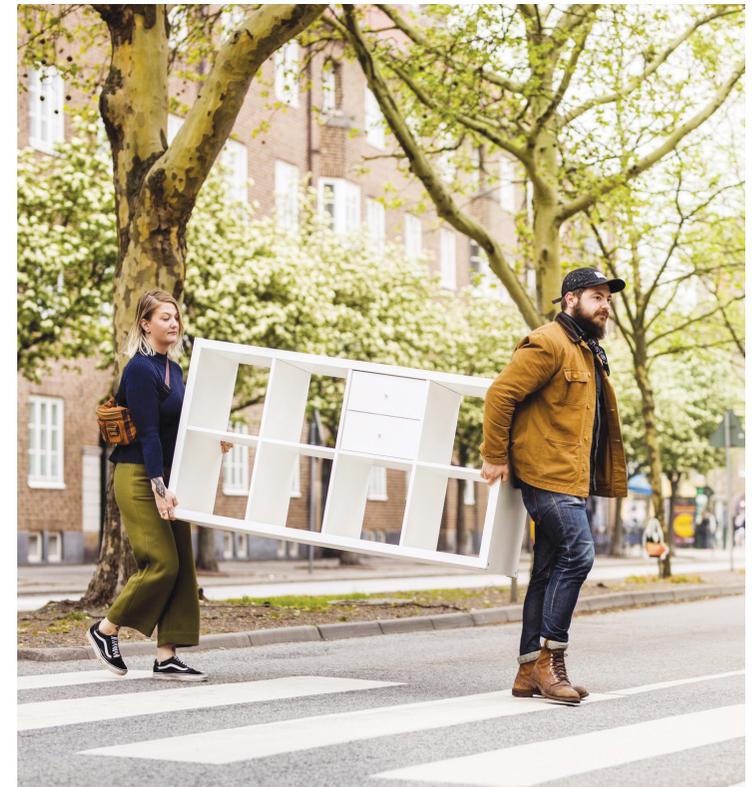


Finally, 'greener' brands went beyond climate pledges by focusing on creating immediate impact. Despite losing 70% of its revenue during lockdown – which is as good an excuse as any to put environmental efforts on hold – BrewDog doubled down on its sustainability efforts. In August, the brewer became the first carbon negative beer brand, promising to remove twice as much carbon from the atmosphere as it produces. To achieve this, the company purchased a 2,000-acre plot of land in the Scottish

Highlands, where it plans to plant 1 million trees. And it switched to wind power (for its breweries) and electric (for its fleet of delivery vehicles), among other things. 'Our Carbon. Our Problem,' said BrewDog co-founder James Watt. 'So, we are going to fix it ourselves.'

## Restoring balance

If nothing else, the momentum around a Great Reset has shone a light on the inequalities in business and the damage that excess consumerism can wreak



on the planet. 'Capitalism has many things going for it, but untamed capitalism can devastate us,' behavioural economist Dan Ariely told Contagious back in January.

But perhaps the talk of a Great Reset has also offered the validation that brands need to shift to a more balanced, considerate and – dare I say it – purposeful way of doing things. Because, for all the talk of a fundamental reset, striving for a greener, smarter and fairer world doesn't have to be that radical at all. 🌱

# Virtual Necessity

The pandemic has sped up digital transformation by making it a necessity for many brands, argues Becca Peel

**T**he pandemic forced people to retreat from the real world and into the digital one, and for many brands, the transition from physical-first to virtual-only was a sharp shock.

A common response was to take an existing business model and 'get it on Zoom'.

As a result, Zoom experienced record rises in number of users, from 10 mil-

lion in January to 200 million in March. Soon, Zoom had become a social networking app, used not just for work but also family gatherings, dating, fitness, virtual cocktails and trivia, as people and brands instinctively tried to replicate normality with screens.

And in some cases, this transfer worked well. For instance, The National Theatre At Home initiative,

which made plays more accessible at a time when people were craving entertainment. The institution has broadcast 16 productions that were watched 15 million times by more than 9 million households, reaching 173 countries around the world.

Similarly, lockdown presented Jägermeister with a stark challenge, because it is a party drink, and not

something that people would think to sip at home alone. Its solution was to bring the parties to people's homes. The brand launched Meister Drop-Ins, which enabled people to book DJs, magicians, etc, to appear at their Zoom gatherings (paid for by Jägermeister).

## Screen fatigue and homogeneity

While the virtual alternatives to pre-lockdown activities were welcome, there was an element of sameness to brands' responses, which all focused on delivering frictionless convenience. The best brands and marketers spotted both the threat and the opportunity apparent in that.

In 2019, 'consistency' was cited as the most important factor for differentiated customer experience in Isobar's CX Survey. But in 2020 it was 'creativity'. This marks the shift from customer experience to creative experience. Technology today must help build differentiated, brand-building experiences as our world moves beyond minimising friction to maximising desire.

Jean Lin, Isobar global chairman, reasons: 'To thrive in this new environment, brands must offer seamless alignment between belief and behaviour – that means making good on their brand values at every possible touchpoint. It also means leveraging the new creative canvas created by technologies to design experiences that are distinctive, delightful and disarmingly human.'



## Level up

The areas that tend to supply the most creative responses are those hardest hit by the coronavirus, like travel and tourism.

Sentosa Development Company initially responded to the closure of its island resort by making Zoom backgrounds.

But the team at BBH Singapore realised this wasn't hitting the mark. The agency reasoned that, because people came to Sentosa's island resort to take a break, that's what the brand should continue to provide within the constraints of lockdown.

Nintendo's Animal Crossing: New Horizons game, which had exploded in popularity amid the pandemic, provided the perfect medium, and Sentosa created its own in-game island for players to explore.

Even companies that were not disrupted by the coronavirus lockdowns have shifted their focus to creating virtual experiences.

Confectionery brand Milka has suffered no slump in demand during these tough times as people seek small indulgences to comfort themselves, and it has no problem with supply, either, since it is sold in stores deemed essential. Still, the brand quite literally raised its game when it launched the Virtual Egg Hunt on Fortnite, in a bid to keep shared moments alive during a time when many people were feeling



isolated and alone. This type of activation is a strong indication that it won't just be the brands that are forced to adapt at will.

## Forever or for now?

While there is hope in sight that restrictions will lift once a vaccine is rolled out, we'd bet that 2021 still will not look much like 2019. While some things likely will spring back (we assume people would much rather party together in a bar than alone through a screen, for instance) not everything will.

Sascha Kuntze, the chief creative officer at BBH Singapore who worked on the Sentosa campaign, has this advice: 'Don't look at what's in front of you right now, think ahead, think of the future. Every brand or business has started out by facing uncertain times. Everyone had a spirit of optimism as entrepreneurs and they were brave. If you take that spirit you had when you started out and apply it now, I think you might come out of this stronger than when you actually went into this.'

Brands that figured out why people come to them in the first place, the value they add to people's lives beyond the product itself, and how to communicate and enhance that through virtual experiences, will come out of this strange and challenging year stronger. 🌸

# Going Viral is Dead, Welcome to the Carefully Constructed Movement

Since the early 2000s, campaigns and marketers have chased the dream of 'breaking the internet', but not only is 2020 a bad time to talk about virality, it is also an immeasurable goal and a misunderstood idea

**T**here probably was a time when content would just naturally spread on the internet, the organic attention would flow and with little effort, and just the right style and message, brands could reap the rewards.

Recent years have shown how misconstrued that idea has become. For a campaign to grow organically at scale, careful orchestration, insight and an understanding of cultural trends is required. Several companies have tried

to align themselves with cultural issues and causes, and have faced a backlash from some audiences for doing so, despite underlying messages of positivity: Gillette's 'We believe', Maersk's 'All the way' and Pepsi's 'Live for now' are just a few examples of content that received a significant level of negative organic attention.

Backlash can happen because we don't pay enough attention to whom the message affects, who the sender is, and



especially the cultural frame of reference in which the ad will be received. To combat this, we need to acknowledge how incredibly fast the digital landscape changes and create something that resonates with our chosen audiences' state of mind here and now. If done correctly, it results in incredible staying power and brand affinity.

One example of a controversial campaign that succeeded is Nike's 'Dream Crazy' with Colin Kaepernick. Yes, there was backlash but it was nothing compared to how well it resonated with the need for companies to take a stand against injustice because it championed a cause with which a significant part of the global audience were aligned.

Another campaign that shows incredible staying power without being controversial in the usual sense of the word is Volvo Trucks' 'Epic split'. The ad paid homage to the emotional connection between drivers and their trucks while catering to an internet hungry for the next big thrill. To this day, it receives more

views every time Volvo Trucks releases new content.

There is a growing focus on the KPIs that follow these culturally relevant campaigns. Companies seek organic effects and lasting impact, just as their customers expect them to align with their values much more. They want to go from moment to movement, which lines up perfectly with the growing wish from consumers for brands and advertising that have relevance and resonating values. Paradoxically, spend on push-marketing and mass advertising is steadily increasing, which is by-and-large not rewarding those KPI's and wishes effectively.

It is time to break with old ideas of 'going viral' and pretending it can be achieved by chance and spending enough money – it requires work and skill to understand your audiences and create great organic campaigns that will resonate positively. 📌

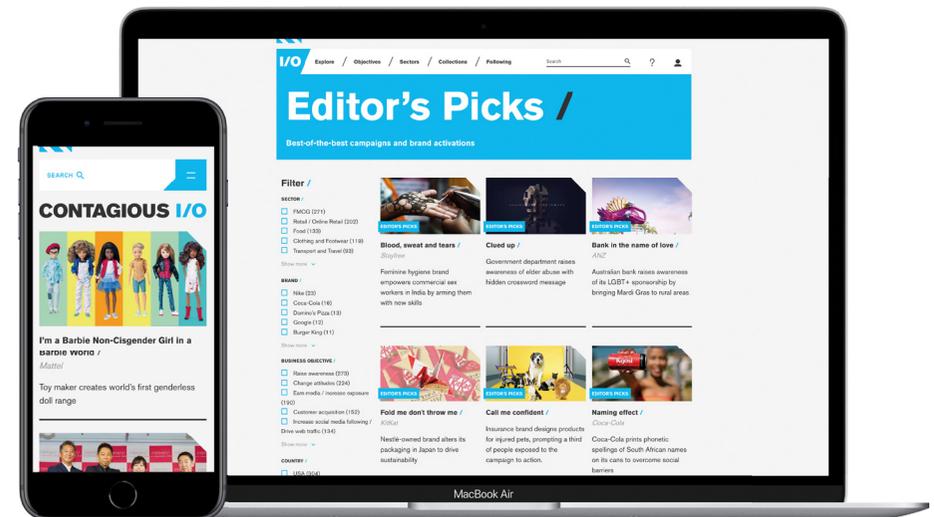
*By Troels Ringsted, head of research, Amplify 360 by Verizon Media.*

**‘The gyms who think they sell a space to work out are currently closed, the ones who realised they sell motivation and belonging are finding new audiences and revenue online, which may help them stay afloat. There’s a lesson for us all in there.’**

# Snipppe

It's frustrating seeing only a fragment of the whole picture, isn't it? The Most Contagious Report is just a teeny tiny portion of the knowledge found on **Contagious I/O**, our intelligence tool. Don't you want to see what you're missing?

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# THE MOST CONTAGIOUS CAMPAIGNS OF THE YEAR 2020 /

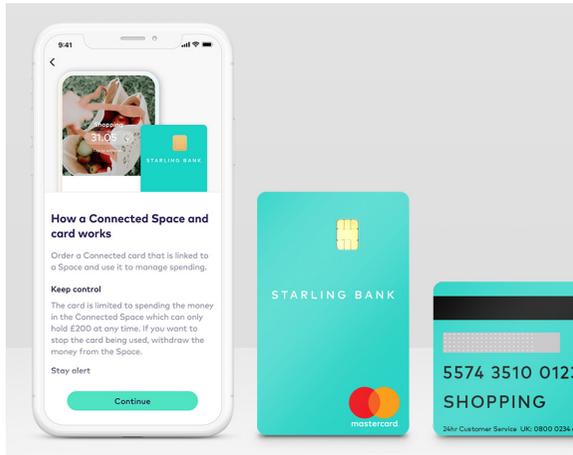
We sift through tens of thousands of campaigns every year. This list represents the best of the best: the 25 campaigns that we've judged to be the most creative, most effective or just the most impossible-to-ignore



## **Dove / Courage Is Beautiful (Ogilvy, London + Toronto)**

Dove's campaign was of a type that was produced in abundance in the early days of the pandemic. It struck the same sombre-yet-resilient tone that almost every brand used to ease themselves back into the public consciousness during lockdown. Yet it was still unmistakably Dove, and that's to the brand's credit.

Dove was one of the first major brands to align itself behind a point of view when it launched its Real Beauty campaign in 2003. And it has stayed true to that purpose ever since. As a result, Courage Is Beautiful felt like a natural progression (in the extreme circumstances of the pandemic) of the brand's already-established philosophy. And the decision to only run the campaign in areas where the brand had made substantial donations to Covid-relief efforts demonstrated that it had kept pace with changing expectations of what brand purpose means. That's the real beauty of Dove.



## Starling Bank / Connected Card

With a mission to provide a more human alternative to traditional rivals, mobile-only startup Starling was voted Best British Bank three years running. Which explains why, when the country's Covid-19 lockdown began, and many a marketer pillaged stock footage libraries and commissioned calming piano versions of rock classics, Starling chose practicality over platitudes. To solve a friction-point for those self-isolating and relying on others to fetch their groceries, Starling created the Connected Card: a second debit card linked to a customer's personal account. This rapid new product had a unique PIN, a spend limit of £200 and was restricted for use inside physical shops only – 18,000 vulnerable people ordered one.



## B&Q / Build a Life (Uncommon London)

Alongside video conferencing apps and brands of antibacterial gel, this year gave the DIY sector its moment in the sun. With people spending more time indoors, B&Q's Build a Life campaign couldn't have been better timed.

In a departure from category norms, the home improvement retailer struck a chord with UK homeowners through its emotional take on DIY: a campaign film featuring real home videos from families from every city in the UK highlighted the true value of home improvements, while a voiceover by *Game of Thrones* actor Rory McCann breathed new life into B&Q's long-time tagline, 'You can do it'. Then, billboards that reflect life moments (and how home improvement can shape them) appeared across the UK, made unmissable by B&Q's distinctive orange branding.

The campaign's nostalgic tone reconnects the brand with the home and family life, elevating DIY from headache-inducing to life-enhancing.



## Ben & Jerry's / We Must Dismantle White Supremacy

If it were just the five words in the headline, Ben & Jerry's post about ending systemic racism would still pack a punch. It's unusually direct, eschewing bland messages of solidarity or a black tile on Instagram in favour of a more radical call to action.

Then, behind the hard-hitting headline, the brand's statement continues to hit hard, calling by name the failures and prejudices that led to the police killing of George Floyd on 25 May. It also outlines four tangible legislative responses to address the issue. Silence is not an option, says the brand, and it is using its voice not just to say it like it is but to advocate for change.

Far from bandwagon-jumping or purpose-retrofitting, social activism has been core to Ben & Jerry's since its foundation, and it continues to put real actions behind the issues it cares about. That's what makes this powerful: it gets you in the guts, but it has some solid follow through, too.



**Nike / You Can't Stop Us (Wieden+Kennedy, Portland)**

The third film in Nike's You Can't Stop Us campaign is so perfectly synchronised, so slick – it almost looks effortless. In reality, the 90-second video is a painstaking triumph of editing and human patience: alongside a production team, Wieden+Kennedy, Portland, sifted through 4,000 hours of footage to find 72 clips that were stitched together into 36 split-screen frames.

Narrated by US soccer player Megan Rapinoe, the film features 53 athletes from 24 sports, all masterfully blended together (a discus thrower merges into a pirouetting ballerina, a tennis serve arcs into the swing of a baseball bat). Aesthetics aside, the film sensitively tackles the headlines of 2020 (cleaners in hazmat suits disinfecting stadium seating, teams taking the knee in honour of George Floyd) and folds them into its message: You Can't Stop Us. At just shy of 59 million views (at the time of writing), this campaign is indisputably contagious.



**Almacenes Éxito / Most Valuable Promo (Sancho BBDO, Bogotá)**

Bogotá agency Sancho BBDO had found the perfect place for Colombian retailer Almacenes Éxito to promote its range of electrical goods – inside Call of Duty: Mobile. It was the ideal medium to reach the young buyers that Almacenes Éxito sought. The only problem was that the game didn't accept advertising.

Undeterred, Sancho BBDO came up with a solution. The agency enlisted the three top Call of Duty players in Colombia and put a discount on their heads. If players managed to kill one of the influencers in the game, they won a discount on an Almacenes Éxito product. Not only did this deceptively simple idea overcome restrictions, it did so in a way that did not feel forced or invasive, and it drove brand awareness in an uncontested space while turning its products into a badge of honour – not to mention that sales increased by a healthy 7% and an astonishing 78% of coupons were redeemed.



**Burger King / Moldy Whopper (INGO, Stockholm, David Miami and Publicis Worldwide)**

Burger King's Moldy Whopper was a kind of Rorschach test for industry professionals. What they saw reflected how they think advertising works. And when the campaign was released in February, it triggered some ugly scenes, as creatives and strategists sniped at each other for worshipping false gods of persuasion.

The campaign was also a prime example of Burger King's strategy to compete with larger, heavy-spending rivals through shock and PR. And by all accounts, it did its job.

The Moldy Whopper amassed 8.4 billion organic media impressions, and in the US it achieved 30% awareness, higher even than Burger King's 2019 Super Bowl spot. It doesn't matter whether you thought the ad was brilliant or demented, because you undoubtedly did think about it – and that's the point. There could be no list of the best ads of 2020 without it.



### **Australian Mint / Donation Dollar: Give to Help Others**

Nudging came in for some flack this year from people who thought it too woolly to tackle a problem as serious as the pandemic. But it is still held in esteem in at least some high places. The Royal Australian Mint, for instance.

The mint's simple but powerful Donation Dollar campaign made its nudge tangible, prompting charitable giving with a specially designed AU\$1 coin stamped with the message 'Donation Dollar: Give to help others'. The initiative exemplifies the cumulative value of small actions and raises both individual and national awareness of the need for charitable donations. It went beyond pocket change too: with 3.5 million coins minted so far, eventually reaching 25 million in total – roughly one for every Australian.



### **Coca-Cola / Open Like Never Before (72andSunny Amsterdam)**

While we saw a wave of supportive, if clichéd, messages from brands early on in the pandemic, Coca-Cola waited it out, pausing marketing spend until the moment was right.

Its first campaign back from hiatus, created by 72andSunny and released in August, championed community and family, and teased out small take-aways from the time we spent indoors.

Even with the slightly shoehorned product shots, the film touches a nerve. George Mpanga (better known as George The Poet) is a London-born spoken word artist known for his poetry, music and podcast, and his talented contribution to the ad is key to its resonance. It helps that the ad was strategically released at a time in the UK when people were feeling cautiously hopeful about returning to normality, and it chimed with the mood of the nation. The result was an ad that found that tricky sweet spot between reflection and optimism.



### **Bodyform / Womb Stories (AMV BBDO, London)**

Leave it to Bodyform to end the culture of silence around women's reproductive organs. In a graduation from the all-singing, all-dancing celebration of female anatomy that was Viva La Vulva, Bodyform's Womb Stories tackled the stigma surrounding many unspoken experiences, such as IVF, miscarriage, endometriosis and menopause.

It's the type of boundary-pushing work we've come to expect from the feminine hygiene brand, but that doesn't make it any less powerful. From the heartbreak of a miscarriage to a woman plucking a hair from her nipple, there's not a whiff of euphemism or sugar-coating; as a brand with a mission to 'live fearless', Bodyform doesn't have time for that. Womb Stories not only pushes the conversation forward, it starts new ones. And for that, it deserves a spot on the list.



### **L'Oréal / At Home with Eva Longoria (McCann, New York, Paris)**

This year has thrown its fair share of shit our way: lockdowns, cancelled holidays, deepening climate crisis, a global recession – it's enough to give anyone grey hairs. But with hairdressers closed, fixing that was tough. That is, until L'Oréal Paris enlisted the help of global brand ambassador Eva Longoria to give us a demo on how to use its Excellence Crème home hair dye.

The 45-year-old actress created a step-by-step guide, filmed using Microsoft Teams, on how she restores her brown locks. Not only did it show the efficacy, convenience and reliability of L'Oréal Paris' arsenal of products, it also allowed the brand to connect with its housebound fans in a way that felt authentic, honest and empathetic.



### **Sentosa Development Corp / Virtual Sentosa (BBH Singapore)**

What wouldn't you give for a holiday right now? Alas, it seems likely that the only trip we'll be taking anytime soon is into the adjacent room. For those of you looking for a bit of escapism in 2020, Sentosa Development Corporation and BBH Singapore found a solution: Virtual Sentosa – a replica of the luxury getaway Sentosa island hidden within Animal Crossing: New Horizons.

Virtual Sentosa has hosted an eighth birthday party, weddings, press conferences where journalists could be virtually wined and dined, and even influencers shooting content for their social channels, and it has evolved from a branded activation to legitimate virtual destination topping the must-see list.



### **Budweiser / Wassup Covid Edition (DDB Chicago)**

As the coronavirus has forced us apart physically, brands have used their advertising to try to show people coming together in other ways. Budweiser updated its 20-year-old Wassup ad, which was created by DDB Chicago, using deep fake technology to change the dialogue of the actors to show them checking in on one another during quarantine. When your messaging centres on old friends getting back in touch, why not bring back an old familiar friend to deliver it? Just buds supporting buds and being together at a distance. We'll drink to that.



**Inspired by Iceland / Looks Like You Need To Let It Out (M&C Saatchi Group, London, New York)**

Non stop Zoom calls. Hearing the phrase 'the new normal' 50 times a week. Your facemask incessantly steaming up your glasses. These are just some of the things that have made people want to scream this year.

Inspired By Iceland found a way to let people vent their rage while also promoting the country as a holiday destination.

The tourism board created a website where people could record their screams and then release them (via speakers placed throughout the country) into Iceland's beautiful echoing landscape. More than 20,000 people participated in the campaign, which gave people a reason to think about Iceland as a holiday destination just as the first lockdown began to ease. Now that's something worth shouting about.



**Carlsberg / Adopt A Keg (Grey Europe)**

Pouring one out for the boys took on a whole new meaning this year as reports surfaced of bartenders pouring expired golden ales, pilsners and India pale ales down the drains of pub back alleys. Danish beer brand Carlsberg came up with a way to soften the blow for both the struggling on-trade businesses and drinkers who missed their local.

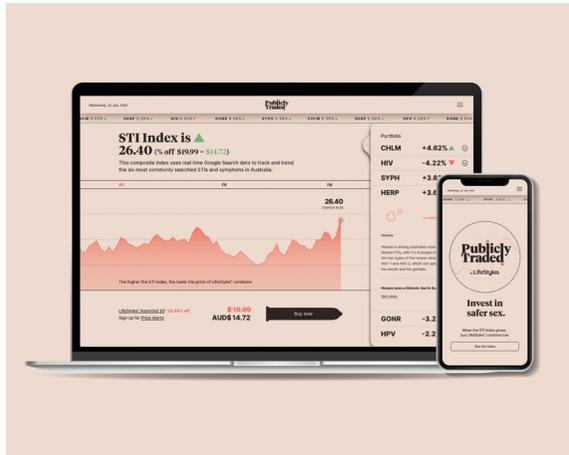
The Adopt a Keg campaign asked Danes to scan their bottles or cans of Carlsberg to fill up a virtual keg on the brand's website. Once four beers had been scanned, the keg could be redeemed for two pints in any of the 600 bars and restaurants that had signed up to participate in the campaign, once they were allowed to reopen. By June, 10,000 virtual kegs had been filled.



**Planters / Baby Nut (VaynerMedia, New York)**

Kraft-Heinz's Planters earned over 11.4 billion media impressions by killing off its 104-year-old mascot, Mr Peanut, in a car crash two weeks before the 2020 Super Bowl, only to then somewhat bizarrely reincarnate him as a baby nut.

Created by VaynerMedia in New York, the campaign featured a video of Mr Peanut with actors Matt Walsh and Wesley Snipes driving along a cliff edge. Suddenly, swerving off the road to avoid an armadillo, the three are sent flying out of the car and end up clinging onto a tree branch. Mr Peanut then plunges into the ravine, giving up his life in order to save his friends. Mr Peanut's funeral was aired during the Super Bowl before showing him reincarnated as a character named Baby Nut. This nutty campaign was the the number one trending topic on Twitter and received over 934,000 mentions on the platform.



## LifeStyles / Publicly Traded (FCB/SIX, New York)

Sexual health and the stock exchange make strange bedfellows. But to get young men to invest in safe sex, wellness brand LifeStyles launched an online index that used Google data to track real-time STI transmission rates. As the STI Index went up (whenever people searched for anything STI-related), LifeStyles would lower the price of its condoms in response. The higher the rate of transmission, the cheaper the condoms.

Designed to resemble the stock market, the Publicly Traded platform was promoted through IPO-themed ads on social media and financial websites that urged people to 'Minimize Risk. Maximize Pleasure'. FCB/SIX New York's campaign successfully deployed this monetary metaphor to convey the urgency of risks around STIs. It also inspired Australian men to nurture their sexual wellbeing the same way they'd nurture their portfolio.



## Dettol / #HandWashChallenge

It isn't often that a public-health campaign goes viral, but disinfectant brand Dettol broke records in India with its #HandWashChallenge on TikTok.

Dettol created the campaign to encourage thorough hygiene amid the pandemic by creating a dance routine that mimicked the process of effective handwashing.

After roping in some of India's biggest TikTok's influencers to get some momentum behind the campaign, hundreds of thousands of videos were created, generating a whopping 125.2 billion views, according to the brand's TikTok page. Dettol brilliantly and quickly reacted during the pandemic's early stages, managing to propel itself into the limelight when hand washing was top of people's minds.



## ASB / Borrow the All Blacks (WITH Collective, Auckland)

We're used to seeing international sports stars feature in ads for multinational fashion and finance brands, but a local pizza place? Not so much.

But with the economy faltering as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, New Zealand bank ASB wanted to support struggling small businesses. The solution? To loan them a rugby team.

The bank, which has sponsored New Zealand Rugby since 2015, invited small businesses to apply to Borrow the All Blacks (as well as the Black Ferns and the Maōri All Blacks). Members of the teams would feature in five ads for each of the 100 successful applicants, which specialised in everything from dessert delivery to doggy day care.

As well as showing support for small businesses, the initiative raised awareness of the bank's offering. And, as only business customers were eligible to apply, it gave that all-important incentive to switch accounts. Never forget the all-important conversion.



### **McDonald's / The Travis Scott Meal**

McDonald's meal deal promotion with rapper Travis Scott was so popular it broke the fast food giant's supply chain – and you have to assume that McDonald's supply chain is not an easy thing to break.

Some marketing commentators downplayed the campaign, saying it relied heavily on borrowed interest and discounts, rather than creativity. And maybe they had a point.

But it's impossible to ignore the scale of McDonald's success: news about the meal made headlines even in countries where the offer did not run. When you have one of the most recognisable brands in the world and a budget larger than the GDP of some small countries, everything looks easy. But there's much to admire in McDonald's masterful grip on the fundamentals of effective marketing.



### **Beats by Dre / You Love Me (Translation LLC, New York)**

When brands try to speak to hot-button issues it can often end in disaster. No doubt these kinds of topics are risky places for brands to play. That's why it was all the more impressive when Beats by Dre managed to vividly address the complexity of systemic racism in its You Love Me film in November.

Created by agency Translation LLC, New York, the film illustrated the hypocrisy of non-black people's willingness to embrace black culture without embracing black individuals. It featured a cast of black celebrities asking viewers to consider what their love for black culture means when black people have to fight for equality every day. The film evoked the edgy advertising of Beats' heyday while demonstrating that the brand still has a place at the vanguard of culture.



### **Berocca / Get Supercharged at 2pm (Carnival, Ho Chi Minh City)**

Berocca in Vietnam was the market-leading multivitamin, but people only bought the product when they felt ill. In a bid to increase consumption, the Bayer-owned brand reintroduced itself as the solution to the mid-afternoon slump, in a bid to capture a slice of the lucrative energy-drink market.

For its repositioning campaign, Berocca used three celebrities to create a music video with upbeat dance moves and catchy lyrics, to tell people to use Berocca when they felt tired in the afternoon. People were then challenged to replicate the dance on TikTok. In the wake of the campaign, online sales increased by 675% and offline sales by 115% compared with the previous three months. And by harnessing TikTok's popularity, the brand got people (quite literally) singing about its new positioning.



### **Tesco / No Naughty List (BBH, London)**

The Christmas brief this year was not an easy one to judge. To tug extra hard at the heartstrings or provide escape from the gloom with something absurd? To be fair, brands found success treading both paths. John Lewis, as usual, did not disappoint, with a beautifully crafted ode to random acts of kindness. And paper towel brand Plenty won us over with its excessively gross sermon on festive mess.

But for us a strong idea always wins the day, and on that criteria, Tesco is our pick of the bunch.

The supermarket's declaration that this year there is no naughty list was witty, memorable and relatable, and it was firmly anchored to a commercial proposition – to treat yourself at Tesco. You could quibble about the execution if you liked, but if we had to speculate on the hardest-working Christmas ad of 2020, this one would get our money.



### **Vote the Assholes Out / Patagonia**

As media placements go, the reverse side of a clothing label inside a pair of shorts is hardly a Times Square takeover, but Patagonia's hidden message encouraging people to vote arguably had far greater impact. Photos of the tag went viral first through shock and intrigue ('Is it real?'), and then through global media coverage, with everyone from Vogue to CNN confirming its existence. The phrase, coined by Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard, aimed to create a specific action: voting climate-change deniers out of office in the United States.

When we asked Patagonia's European marketing director, Alex Weller, about whether all brands should follow Patagonia's rabble-raising example, he said, 'There should be no excuse. The reality is that all businesses must work out how to prioritise the health of the planet within their business model'. Oh, and the shorts with the tag sold out, too.



### **KFC / Finger Lickin' Good\* (Mother, London)**

KFC knows a thing or two about how to handle bad press, and in the UK it found itself on the receiving end again as the Covid-19 crisis made its TV spot of customers gleefully licking their fingers the subject of much outrage. Celebrating finger lickin' could not have been more inappropriate. Time to duck and cover? Or maybe time to launch the brand's first ever global campaign instead. Yes, that's more KFC's style. Working with Mother, London, the fast food brand tackled the slogan head on with Finger Lickin' Good\* (note the asterisk), releasing posters, giant billboards and packaging with the tagline blurred and pixelated around the world. The brand also released a global TV spot on the biggest prime time spots declaring, 'That thing we always say? Ignore it, for now,' before ending with a censored version of the tagline. The move whipped up headlines around the world, amassing a deluge of earned media.

**‘The social impact trend is more than cause marketing. It won’t be enough to give away some of the profits to charities or to ally with good causes. In fact, if companies can’t prove their positive social impact in their core business, then good causes won’t want to be associated with them.’**

# Netflix is YouGov's Most Improved Brand and Second-Best Brand in the UK After a Year of Restrictions and Lockdowns

**J**ohn Lewis tops YouGov's 2020 Best Brand Rankings in the UK for the fourth year running in the UK, despite this year's global pandemic and consequent lockdowns and economic downturns.

The rankings were based on the Index score from YouGov BrandIndex, which

Best Brands 2020 (UK)		
Rank	Brand	Score
1	John Lewis	42.6
2	Netflix	42.2
3	Visa	41.8
4	Marks & Spencer	41.8
5	Cadbury	41.4
6	Royal Mail	41.2
7	IKEA	41.1
8	Boots	38.4
9	Cathedral City	37.8
10	Samsung	37.7

is a measure of overall brand health calculated by taking the average of Impression, Quality, Value, Satisfaction, Recommend and Reputation.

In second place, with a score of 42.2, is Netflix, which has benefited from a captive audience this year during the coronavirus lockdown and 'stay at home' order. This is the first time Netflix has ranked in the UK top 10, although the streaming service has placed before in the global rankings.

Visa takes third place with a score of 41.8, rising from fifth place in 2019 with a score increase of 3.5, while Marks & Spencer drops from third place to fourth (41.8) despite increasing its score by 2.9 points.

Cadbury, which was the fourth most improved brand in 2019, has increased in brand health enough to take fifth place (41.4) after a successful campaign

encouraging kindness after lockdown. Sixth place is taken by Royal Mail (41.2), which has increased from seventh place last year.

## Tough competition

The Swedish retailer Ikea has seen the most dramatic change in its ranking, falling from second place in 2019 to seventh place in 2020. This appears to be because other brands have significantly improved, rather than Ikea's own failings, as its own score increased by 2.2 points to 41.1.

Eighth, ninth and 10th place are again held by Boots (38.3), Cathedral City (37.8) and Samsung (37.7) as they were in 2019. Boots and Samsung both improved their scores by 2.8 points while Cathedral City's score grew by 2.4 points.

Tech companies dominate the global best brand rankings

YouGov also released this year's annual global best brands ranking with Google taking the top spot. Tech brands dominate the top of the list with the search and advertising giant followed by WhatsApp, YouTube, Samsung and Amazon.

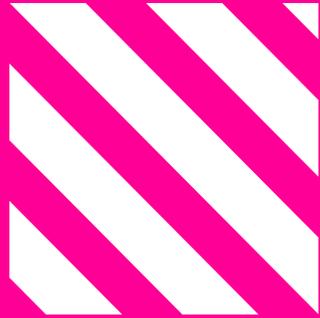
With Netflix and Facebook in sixth and seventh respectively, the only non-tech-related brands in the top 10 are Singaporean ecommerce platform Shopee (eighth), Swedish retailer Ikea (ninth) and US sportswear titan Nike (10th).

For this year's global list, YouGov used

Best Global Brands 2020	
Rank	Brand
1	Google
2	WhatsApp
3	YouTube
4	Samsung
5	Amazon
6	Netflix
7	Facebook
8	Shopee
9	IKEA
10	Nike
11	Nivea
12	Toyota
13	Dettol
14	Colgate
15	Lego
16	UNIQLO
17	Tylenol
18	Panasonic
19	PayPal
20	Almarai
21	Decathlon
22	VISA
23	Rossmann
24	Mercedes
25	Adidas

data from 33 markets – data from countries that cover three sectors or fewer were not counted in the top 25. The rankings use the Index score which assesses overall brand health. It takes into account perceptions of a brand's reputation and whether consumers would recommend the brand to others, as well as whether it represents good value and quality. 🏆

**‘The climate and ecological emergency is the new setting for all stories. It has arrived already, it’s killing millions on the other side of the world. This is the next big looming coronavirus-on-meth that will change everything in all our lives for ever, and yet it’s not the headline of every single brief.’**



**CONTAGIOUS**