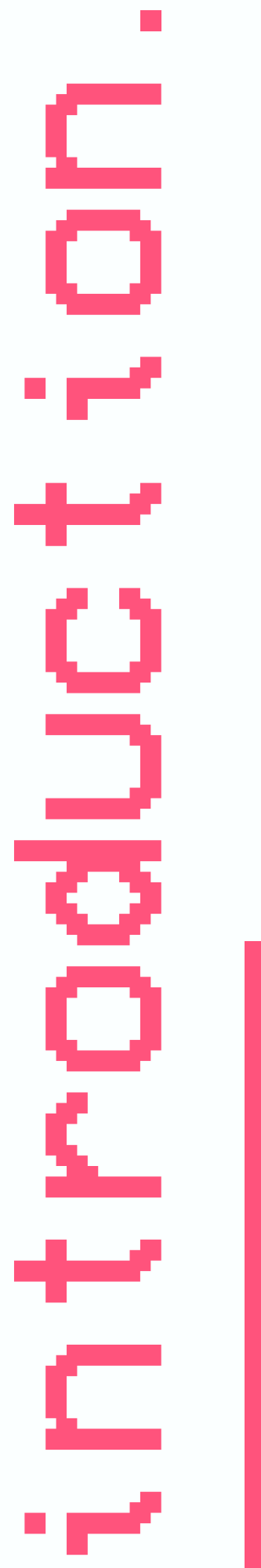


TWENTY TWENTY ONE.

SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS REPORT BY

Social.Lab



If 2020 taught us anything, it is that the future has never been so **unpredictable**.

Almost everything we do has been and will somehow be impacted and altered by the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. While our habits had to be adapted extremely quickly, our relationships evolved too. Our relationships between human beings but, in the context of this document, our relationship to technology and more specifically to social media.

Can you imagine just for one second going through the pandemic without social media? How would the US presidential election have turned out without Twitter? Would teens really dance in their rooms without TikTok? Would e-commerce be as dominant as it is without the likes of Facebook, Instagram or Pinterest?

The answers to these questions are complex, just as 2021 is meant to be complex due to its uncertainty. However, there is one thing that is more certain than ever:

People are becoming increasingly reliant on social media for everything they do, from seeking information to entertainment to communication to services and now to commerce.

Without predicting the future, we will unpack what we believe will be key to lean on in order to (re)connect efficiently with people on social media in 2021.

Authenticity, connection and value are the keys to keeping the relationship between people and tech mutually beneficial, in a more complex and uncertain future than ever before.

> Summary.

- _01. Less friction, bigger value
- _02. Talk to me, please
- _03. It's in the game
- _04. Algorithmic commerce
- _05. The SMB revenge
- _06. Ol' good memories
- _07. The prominence of IGC & UGC
- _08. Livestream shoppers
- _09. Data versus utility
- _10. The pursuit of purpose
- _11. The disinformation gap
- _12. Influencers affiliates
- _13. The new lives of content

01.

less friction,
bigger value.

>> Social media users on the look out for valuable solutions amidst pandemic

2020's aftermath is dictating 21's roadmap. We already see a greater emphasis on value and wellbeing, which automatically influences how content is perceived and evaluated (and thus, how best to navigate this).

Until now, social media was synonymous for showcasing and boosting individualistic status and currency: stories from the club, restaurant and airport check-ins, scripted poolside selfies; we're all familiar with these.

Yet, today, users rely on their social feeds and communities for **solutions**, rather than just adding to the noise. More than just screaming at them with hero content, users need practical hacks on how to manage life and their home office, tailored ads promoting near-front-door experiences or combined flex work and vacations.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

Brands need to understand that, for now, this toned-down value mindset is of great importance and social is the key vehicle to support it. Groups, VR-led platforms and interaction/co-creation triggering formats can help make a difference in this temporary, but significant, new reality.



Image credits: The Classy Issue

Image credits: Airbnb



Airbnb launches global campaign to support domestic travel and local economic growth



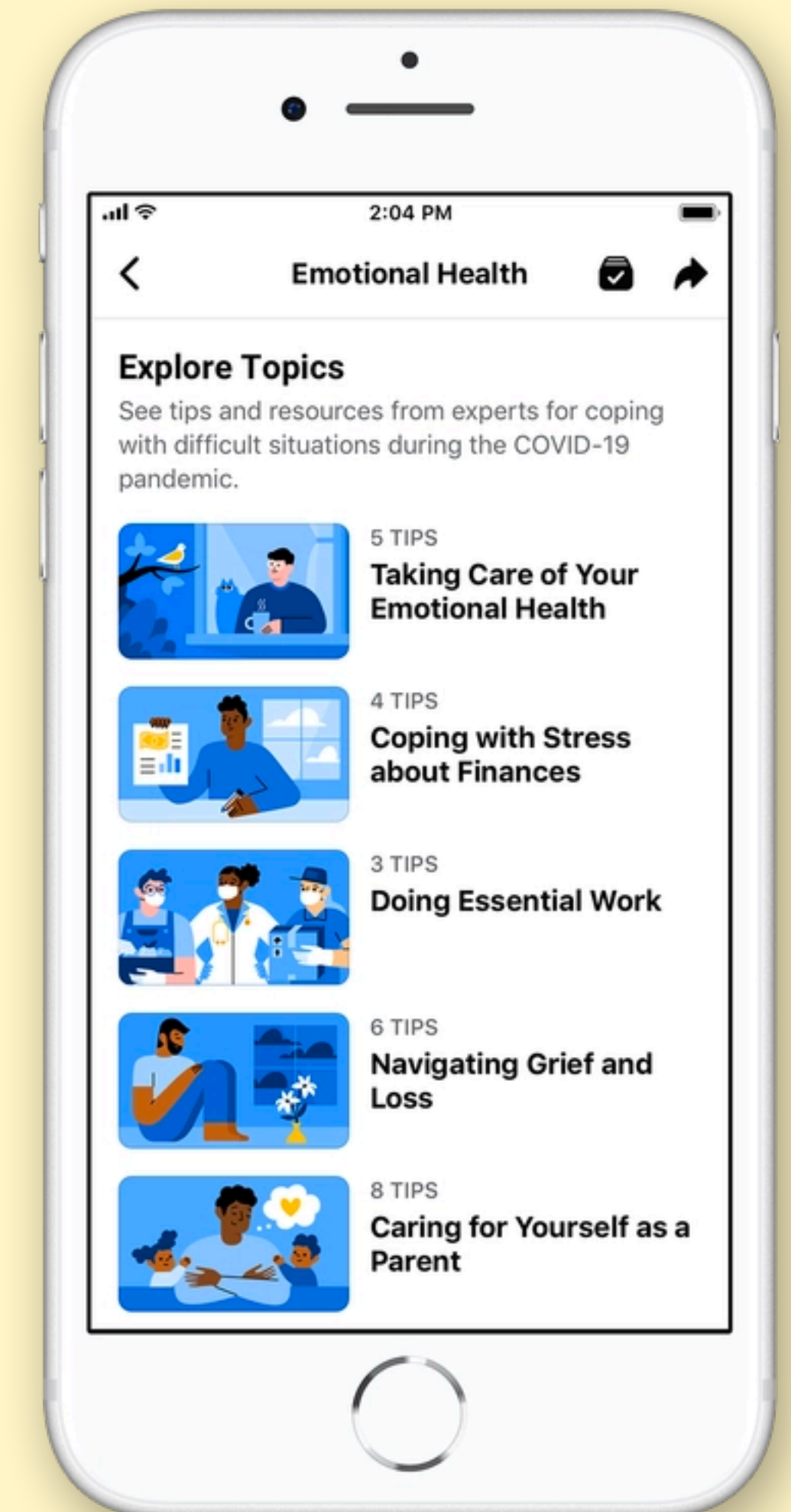
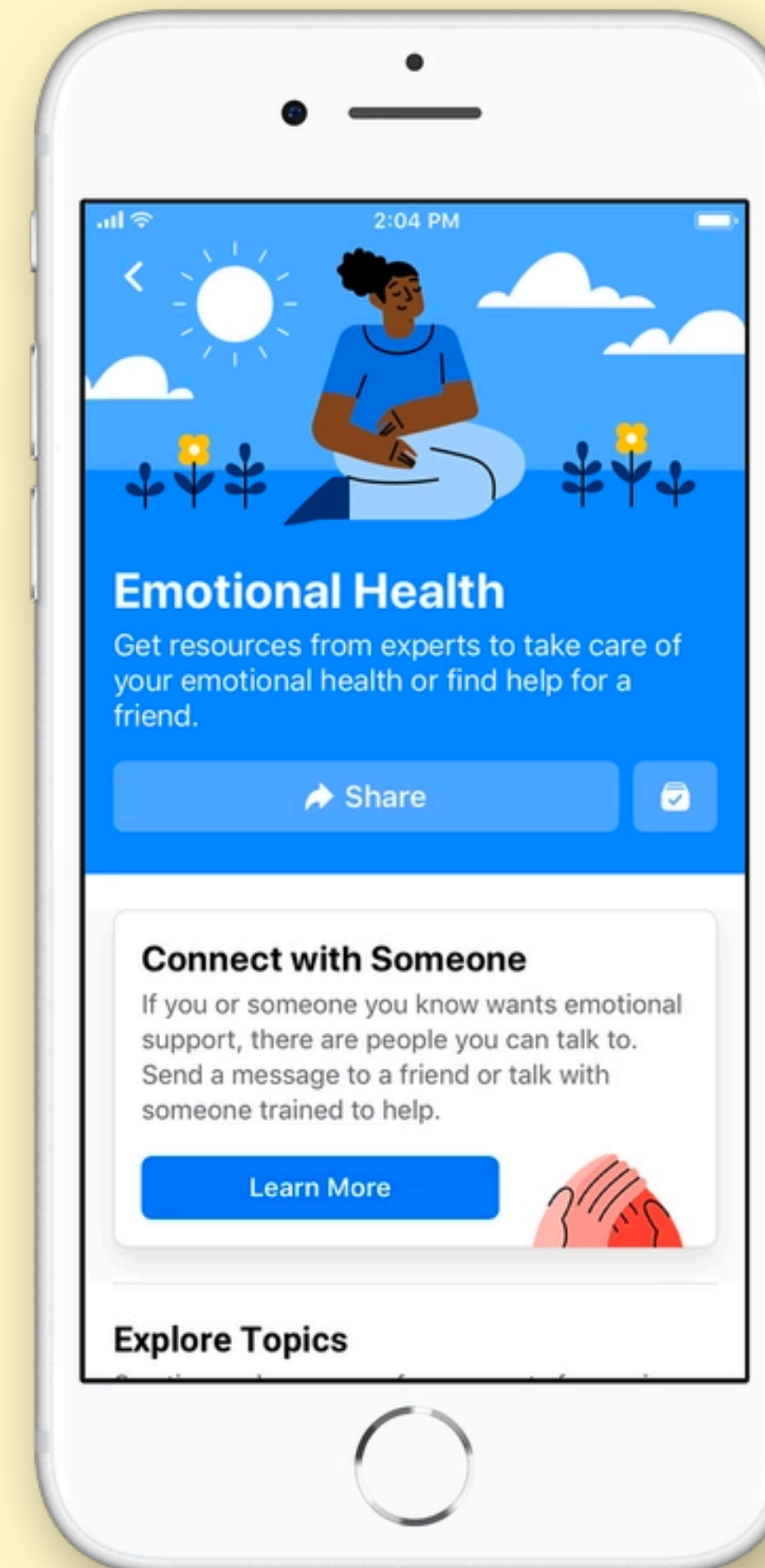
#community

This work includes a series of partnerships with destination-marketing organisations in order to help these organisations use the Airbnb platform in a way that supports local economic development. The effort to make the Airbnb platform available as a tool for communities is informed by historic data on how Airbnb has supported economic empowerment. For example, in 2019, Airbnb's host and guest community generated \$117 billion in estimated direct economic impact across 30 countries alone, a 16 percent increase on the \$100 billion our community generated in 30 markets in 2018.

Facebook launches Emotional Health: a centralised centre with mental health tips

Experts agree that COVID-19 has exacerbated mental health challenges around the world and the repercussions will be felt for years to come. Facebook has been working with leading authorities around the world – like NAMI, Kids Help Phone and It's OK to Talk – to invest in the critical areas of mental health support, including handling financial stress, parenting support, coping with loss and grief, managing substance use and taking care of overall emotional health.

#wellbeing



#experience

Ford Belgium recreates the Brussels Motor Show experience at home with livestream content

The Brussels Motor Show can't be replicated, as it attracts half a million people during 9 days and offers an exclusive experience for attendees. But, if it cannot be replicated, it can be improved. The challenge was to offer easy access to a wider audience, showcase real-world applications to Ford innovations, entertain, inform and engage with hundreds at once, with the ability to track and follow-up every potential lead, while generating content that can live on indefinitely. Through a series of live broadcasts displayed on the Ford website, Ford Youtube channel and Ford Facebook Live, Ford experts and sector professionals discussed and presented Ford's latest models and innovations. The goal was to hit on the hot topics and issues keeping drivers from taking the plunge while highlighting vehicle features and advantages of Ford services, so that viewers could see how one can Upgrade Your Tomorrow with Ford.



Image credits: Ford Belgium

02.

Talk
to me,
please.

>> The rise of Conversational Commerce

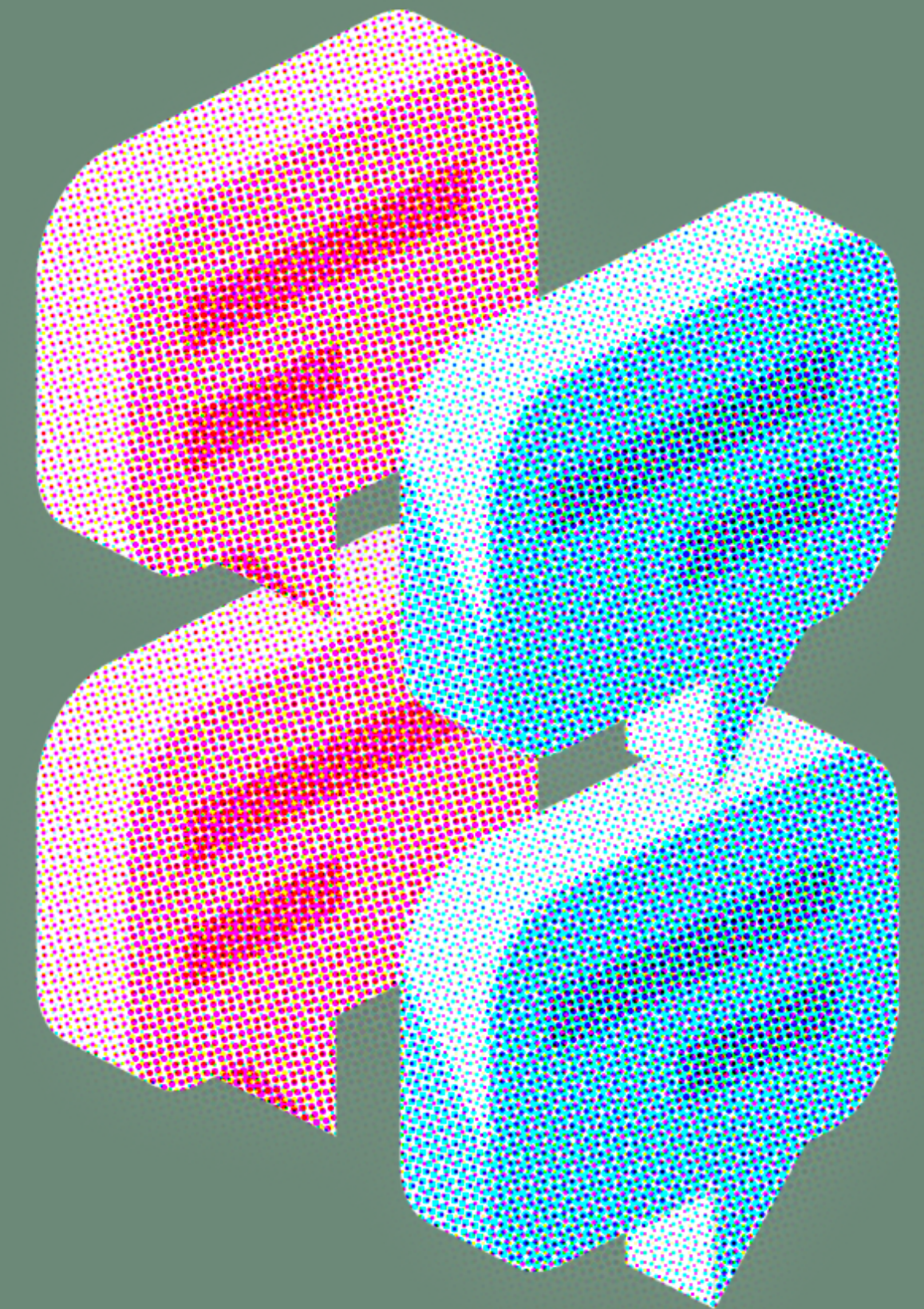
The current global pandemic didn't start the great digital migration, but it has undeniably accelerated it. Our "new normal" of self-quarantining and social distancing has created a retreat to digital to fulfil our most basic needs, as well as higher-order needs of social connectedness and retail therapy.

In the conversion from analog to digital living there was a loss of fidelity, an intangible missing from the experience. Before personalisation, shopping was just personal. In the real world (read: pre-pandemic) it is easy to get help and advice from a store owner or associate, or even a fellow shopper. We lost that human element with the shift to online consumerism.

Conversation Commerce, or C-Commerce, has filled this gap. It relates to any online commerce activity that uses a conversational interface to speak directly to consumers. It can take the form of a chatbox (bot or human), a messaging platform like WhatsApp, or other natural language interfaces ("Alexa, add hand sanitiser to my shopping list.").

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

It is unique to all other forms of marketing communications because it is entirely controlled by the customer and their decision to engage with the brand. C-Commerce is a digital concierge made possible by a technological culture and capability far beyond what Ask Jeeves could have imagined. Once again, the customer wears the pants in the relationship, but allows the brand to help pick out a tasteful pair.



66%

of Facebook and Instagram users surveyed globally said that they had messaged a business during the last festive season.

USA: 35% / EMEA: 42% / LATAM: 58% / APAC: 63%

84%

of customers say the experience a company provides is as important as its products and services.

#customerengagement



Vodafone customer communication service through WhatsApp

Vodafone is the leading telco provider in Germany, offering fixed broadband, mobile communications, internet and TV services. It receives more than 30 million calls from customers in Germany every year. Vodafone Germany has 6.8 million fixed-line customers, 7.6 million TV customers and more than 47 million SIM cards in use.

Vodafone integrated the WhatsApp Business API on November 14, 2018 to streamline customer communications, and achieved the following results:

- More than 350,000 customers served through WhatsApp Business over 5 months
- 700,000 WhatsApp conversations over 5 months
- 62% of customer conversations occurred via WhatsApp over 2 days
- **45% higher opt-in rate for WhatsApp over 2 days, compared to SMS**

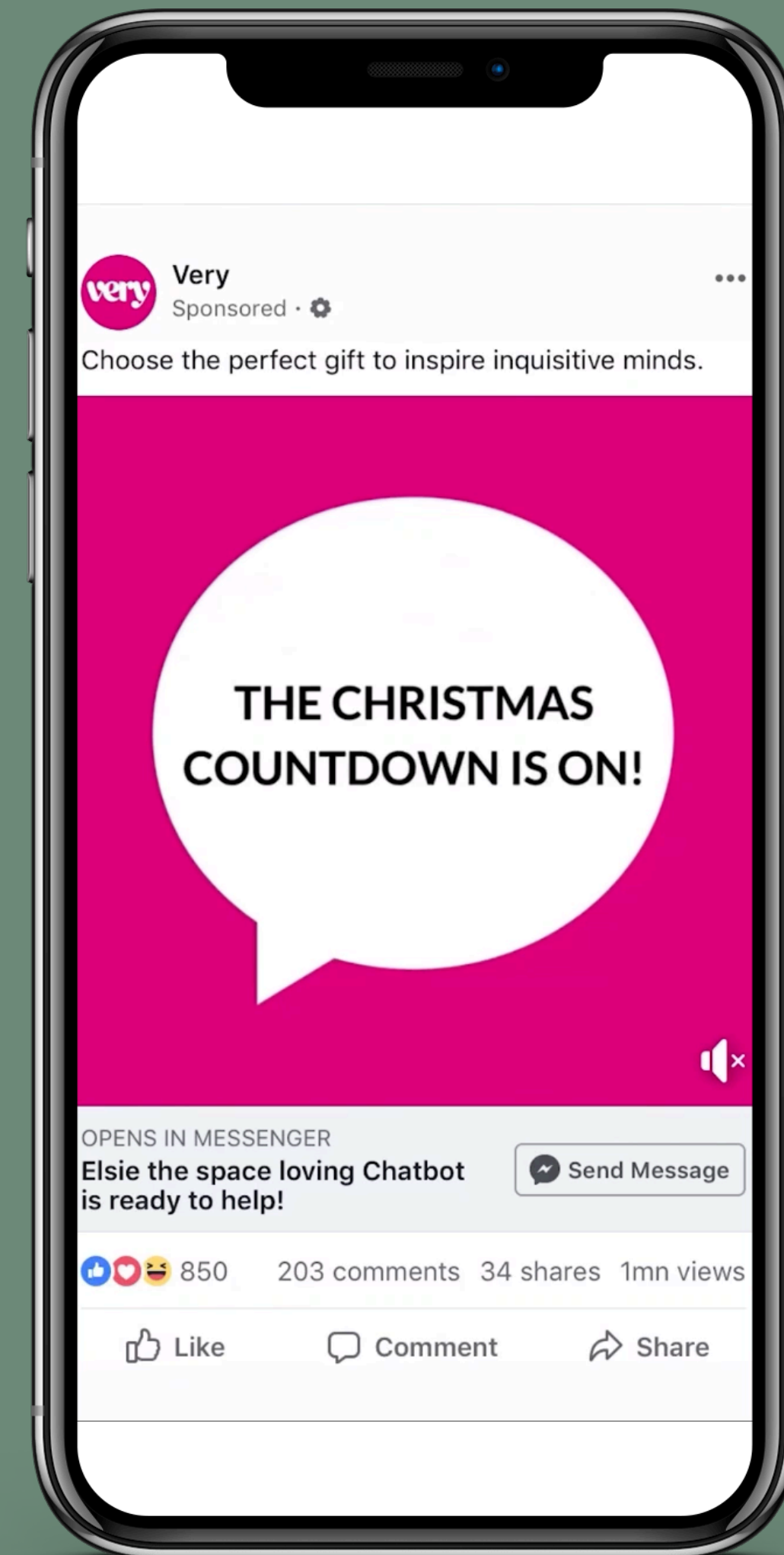
Shop Direct Messenger bot driving social commerce

Shop Direct is the UK's largest integrated digital retailer and financial services provider. Its brands, including Very.co.uk and Littlewoods.com, receive an average of 1.4 million website visits every day, with 74% of online sales completed on mobile devices. Very's products span across clothing, home accessories, toys and gaming.

Shop Direct's friendly bot for Messenger helped customers find gifts that worked for them and drove sales during the Christmas season:

- **£4.9 million in incremental sales**
- **38X return on investment**
- 4.4-point lift in favourability
- 5.7-point lift in campaign awareness
- 12.8-point lift in ad recall

#commerce



03.

It's in the game.

>> Brands exploring new in-game advertising territories

In-game advertising is widely perceived as a costly but smart media buy. The industry is growing bigger than radio and cinema combined, while the attention span on these platforms largely exceeds social counterparts.

Yet, the differentiation comes from those who bring a narrative to the game rather than just a banner. Since the pandemic put a temporary stop to physical gatherings, going metaverse is a trustworthy plan B.

Think of product launches and Black Friday hacks within Call Of Duty's gameplay or millions flocking to concerts hosted on Fortnite. Also, societal topics successfully executed in gaming experiences: Joe Biden and Pride landed on Animal Crossing while AOC broke records in Twitch. When done right, satisfied gamers often contribute to the biggest headlines and generate PR value.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

Brands can unlock an opportunity to build equity among a dedicated and screen-locked community and prompt conversations, similar to proper social campaigns.



Image credits: Unsplash

Hellmann's fighting food waste in Animal Crossing



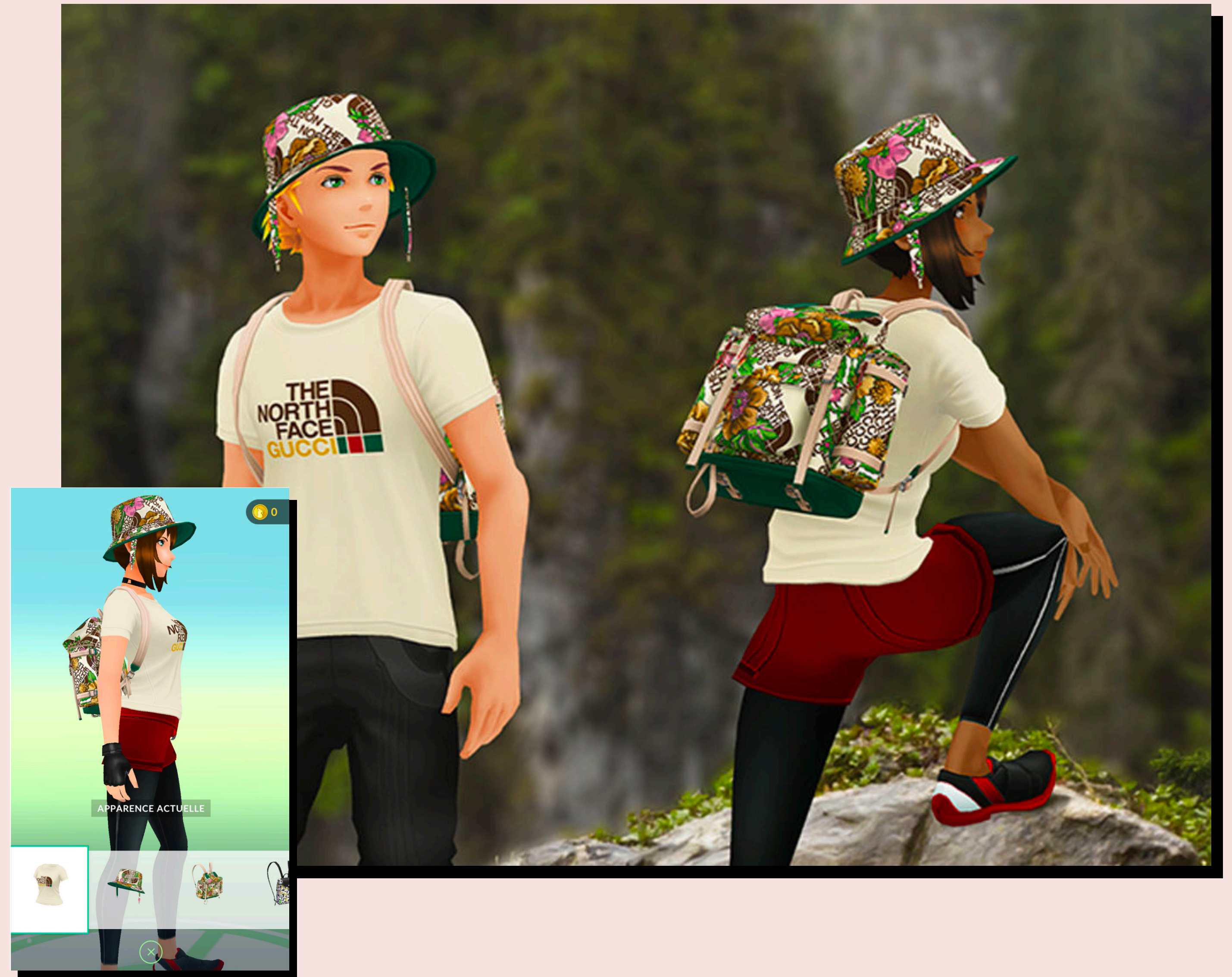
As part of its global brand mission to help people be more resourceful with food and to waste less, Hellmann's Canada has created an island in Nintendo's Animal Crossing: New Horizons game, that offers a five-star virtual island experience and escape, as well as the opportunity for gamers to make change in the real world, by converting their virtual food waste into real food for people in need.

#in-game

Gucci & The North Face dropping new exclusive clothing line on Pokemon Go

To celebrate their iconic collaboration, the luxury and outdoor brand partnered with Pokemon Go to bring a clothing line to life in a virtual environment. Not as frequently played in Europe anymore, Pokemon Go remains a popular virtual destination for Asian players. The clothing line is made available in different 'Pokestops' within the game.

#in-game





04.

Algorithmic Commerce.

>> AI signals targeting making its way into social media

In line with how social media networks grow and expand their offerings, their AI gets smarter and more connected as well. This allows advertisers to engage with their audience in a more user-native manner instead of interest-based carpet bombing.

Algorithmic commerce, or aComm (as coined by Scott Galloway), is a much tighter relationship between selling and AI led signals. In practical terms: delivering your ad more precisely based on how the user behaves on social, in a similar way to how streaming services fine-tune recommendations to their audiences.

TikTok and Shopify's partnership is the most buzz-worthy example in this space: a perfectly adjusted algorithm combined with commerce efficiency. This is an ideal way for advertisers to spark off conversions led by impulse signals instead of top-down funnelling.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

In the post 2020 zeitgeist social media users return to content while advertisers need to cope with a decrease in cookie based targeting. That's why you rather want your ad not to be remembered as an actual ad.

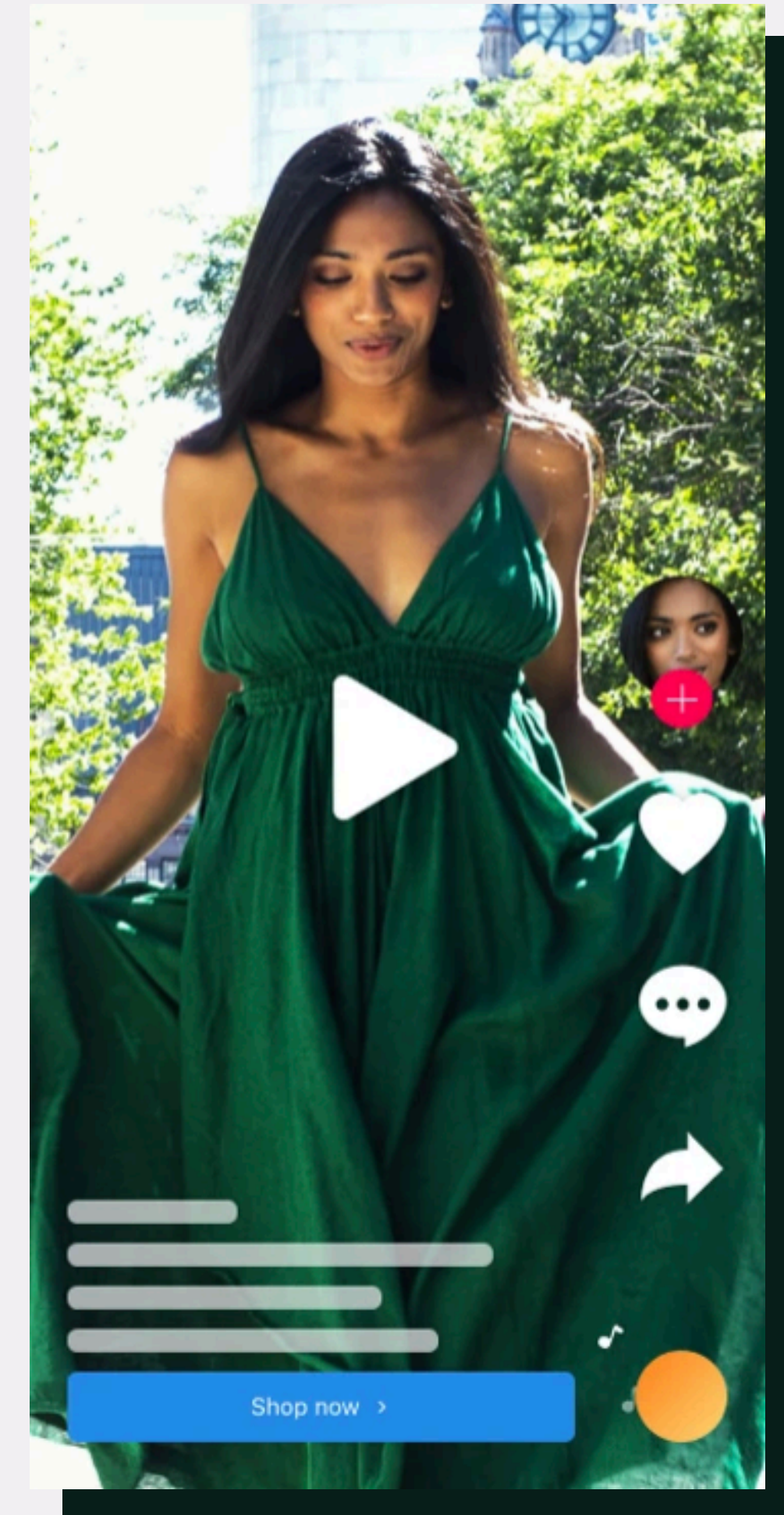


Image credits: TikTok

TikTok x Shopify

First-of-its-kind commerce partnership with TikTok that brings the world's leading destination for short form video to Shopify's more than one million merchants.

In-Feed shoppable video ads within Shopify

Assisted content creation (ready-made templates)

Drive-to Shopify checkout pages

The screenshot displays the Shopify Marketing interface for creating a TikTok video ad. The main window is titled 'Shopify Marketing' and shows a conversion ID '20201021232137'. The interface is split into two main panels. The left panel, 'Activity Details', contains fields for 'Activity Name' (FW 2020), 'Select a Product' (Black Backpack), 'Ad Details' (Video Creative), and 'Ad Text'. The right panel, 'Create Video', is a multi-step wizard. Step 1, 'Set creative materials and product info', includes sections for 'Creative' (Images and Videos), 'Final Frame' (System-generated), and 'Call To Action Text' (Shop this black backpack now!). Step 2, 'Select your video(s)', shows a grid of 10 generated video thumbnails. A dashed arrow points from the 'Black Backpack' product selection in the left panel to the 'Images' section in the 'Create Video' wizard.

05.

The SMB revenge.

>> Facebook becoming a resourceful hub to accelerate SMBs digital transformation

Facebook's stormy 2020 peaked in December when the FTC announced its intentions to tear down the network's monopoly position. Then, the iOS 14 update put a chokehold on the behemoth's premium (re-)targeting possibilities. This is when Facebook defended and positioned itself as **SMB hub**.

"Speaking up for small businesses" the PR tagline stated, including a string of full page newspaper ads, declaring love to local merchants. And while the cause to secure SMB firepower is noble, in the back-end it's all about cash.

According to several sources, SMB's contribute up to 80% of Facebook's ad revenue, regardless of global brand boycotts. This is why the biggest social network is skewing massively towards developments and ad inventory expansion for smaller businesses.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

Facebook Shop is the most tangible example of this refocus. The in-app storefront is a fairly cheap and quick turnaround alternative for local businesses dealing with footfall restrictions and an accelerated social commerce relevance. With a growing number of SMBs turning to Facebook, targets competition and cost-per's may increase over time and challenge established companies.

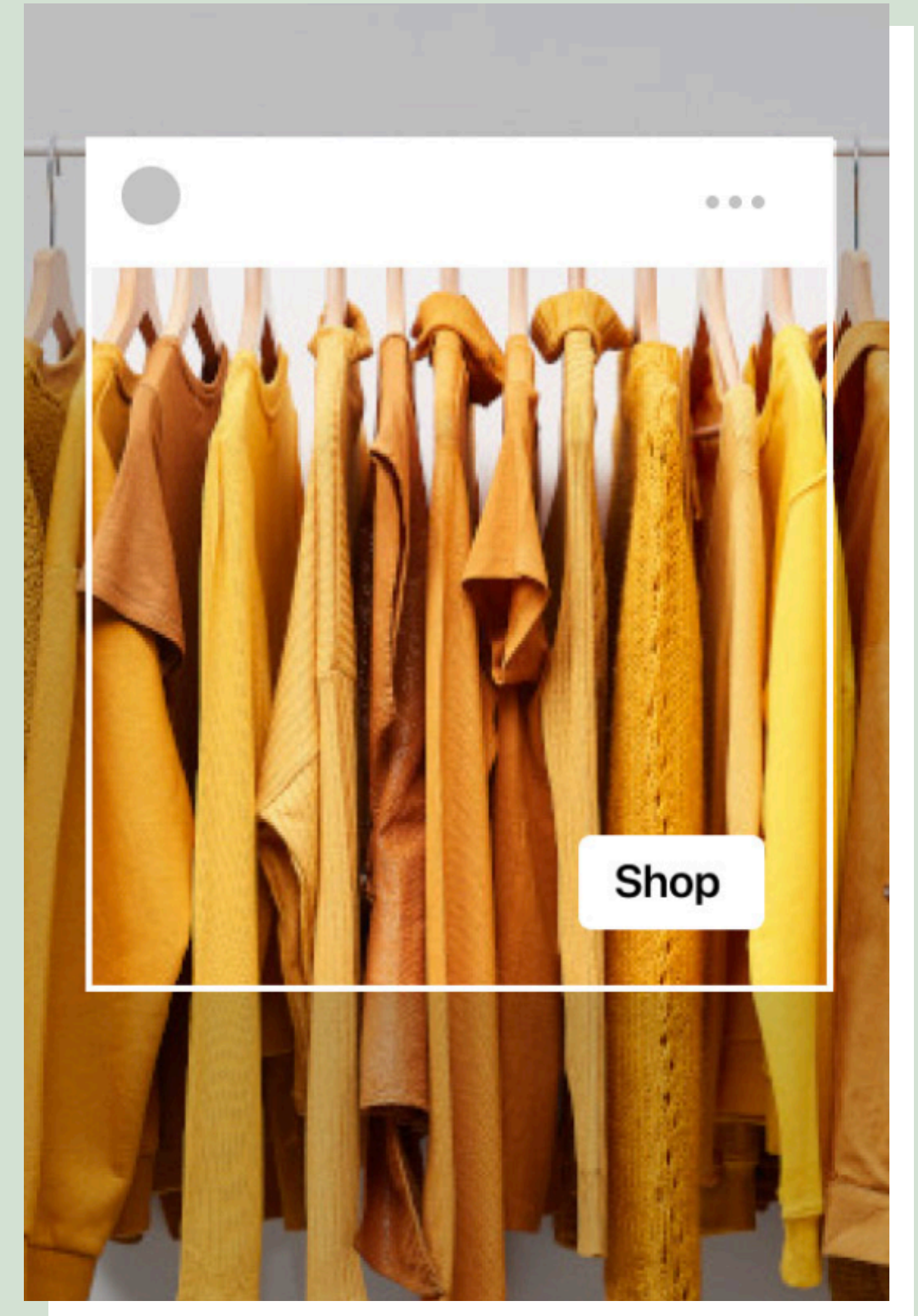
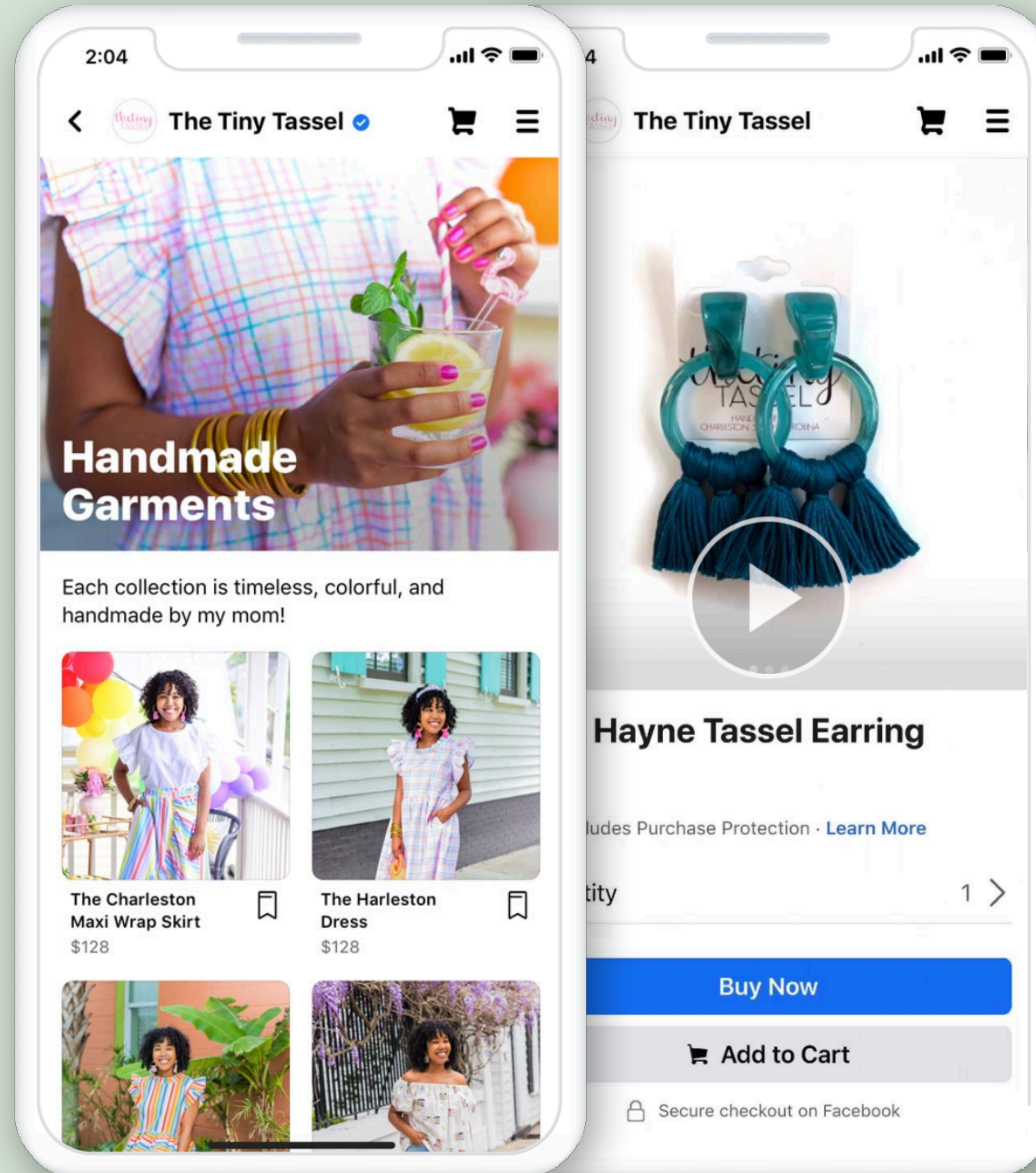


Image credits: Facebook

Single shop **experience** works on both Facebook and Instagram

Customisable **collections** showcase your featured products



Seamless path to **purchase** and **messaging** integration (Messenger, DMs, WhatsApp)

06.

O | '9000d memories



>> The comeback of nostalgia marketing in uncertain times

Cognitive psychology has proved that during times of uncertainty and economic downturn, it usually appears more frequently as consumers look to connect with **happier times** as a distraction from current situations.

Today, more than ever, people are seeking positive vibes where they can, and when they can't... they open the door to their memory rooms. Nostalgia marketing is not new but it's definitely making a comeback in pandemic times. By going back to the roots to move forward, it creates a highly effective emotional hook: capturing the audience by reminding them of a pleasant memory.

Social media platforms such as Facebook have already grasped this cognitive twist by natively reminding users about social memories from time to time, while some brands have tapped into nostalgia marketing in a powerful way (read: not just mentioning the pre-Covid world).

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

By hooking users emotionally, thanks to a shared and positive memory, brands are able to generate brand love/affinity as well as community building and, when thinking long-term, even brand or product recognition.



Image credits: Unsplash



07.

The prominence of IGC & UGC.

>> Users and influencers becoming the new content production studios

Brands that bet big on curated content usually rely on high production levels, which today is still impossible to organise. Because yes, physical distance and quarantining are the norm, transporting of people and securing locations are subject to red flags. But, maybe this is not a problem as such.

With retail, brand experience and user values being (temporarily) reset, content should reflect the **DIY and accessible** angle that social media users are looking for.

This is why unpacking the value of influencers and brand loyalists became more relevant than ever. Apart from a great deal of advocacy, they can create an open source of content that fits today's reality and authenticity needs.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

UGC and IGC can be scaled to different objectives and unlock more flexibility using specific formats and innovations. After all, 2021 is about the return to content, in that case, make it also matter in terms of (re)connection.

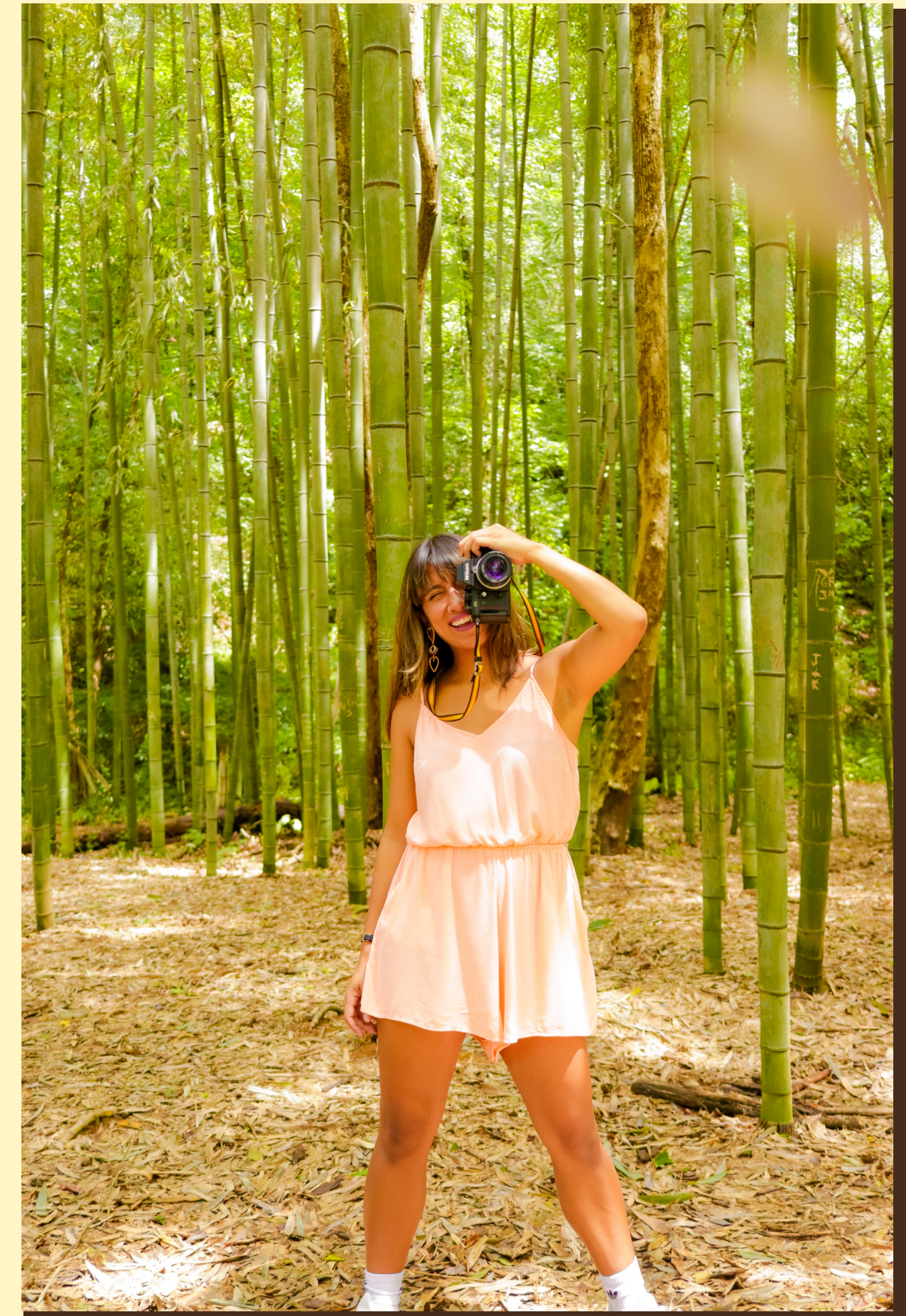


Image credits: Unsplash



08.

Livestream \$hoppers\$.

>> Influencers pushing social commerce right here, right now

Livestream commerce is a user-native way to connect with your audience and prospects. How? By leveraging the power of influence and clever shopping features in high view-time platforms.

This non-scripted combination of commerce, tutorial and real-time fan interaction proved its efficiency in China on super apps such as Alibaba's Taobao. While press coverage around this topic usually handles prolific influencer efforts, it is generally micro-influencers who are the driving force behind this multi-billion phenomenon.

More recently, the live stream commerce solution gained traction in the US, where Instagram rolled out its live shopping feature. Also, TikTok and Amazon rolled out shoppable broadcast possibilities.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

For brands, this represents minimal friction opportunity to showcase products and educate viewers. The influencer is lined up as a sales person but also as a trust aggregator, often stimulating a shorter path to conversion.



Image credits: UX Planet

L'Oréal Malaysia managing sales via Messenger during a Facebook Live event

The luxe division of the skincare company held a 12-hour virtual beauty festival on Facebook Live and used conversational commerce via Messenger to bring in one month's worth of online sales in 24 hours.

During the event, each brand had 1.5 hours to feature its products; introduce celebrities, industry experts and beauty influencers; and host giveaways and flash sales.

During the Facebook Live event, presenters encouraged viewers to use a dedicated hashtag in the comments, which triggered a personalised conversation via Messenger. Customers could then interact with a beauty advisor for a one-on-one consultation, place orders and follow guided assistance to make payment.






Source: Facebook IQ

Amazon rolls out Live Creator as a tentative to enter the livestream commerce space

With Amazon's Live Creator app, a selection of influencers are able to showcase products, engage directly with consumers and eventually grab a commission per qualified product sale through newly launched Amazon affiliate program for influencers.

Previously Live

Kimberly Cherrell is a part of the Amazon Influencer Program

	Jello Shot \$20.00		Mielle Organics Pomegranate And... \$29.42		Redken Detox Hair Cleansing Cream... \$40.00
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Kimberly Kerrell - My Current Wash and Go Routine

09.

Data < > Utility.

>> Social users trading data for convenience in a more complex tech environment

With the underlining fact of people prioritising self-care, we expect connected ecosystems to get bigger. Think of Amazon Care or health wearables added to the equation. This higher level of personalisation obviously means more data transaction and processing.

Yet, if the return for the end user adds up to comfort and great utility, they are fine with this. A trend we already saw in 2020 when more people traded data for efficient eComm solutions.

For brands and advertisers the actual concern is how to meet users' seamless journey expectation while dealing with big tech bringing more complexity to the table: e.g. Google's phasing out of third party cookies or Apple's privacy updates limiting social networks' targeting capabilities.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

Brands might face less volume of data but a better quality. The trick here is to make users opt in without prompting. Basically, offer them so much relevancy that a granular data-stream is guaranteed, preferably within own touch-points to overcome reliance on big aggregators such as Apple and Google.

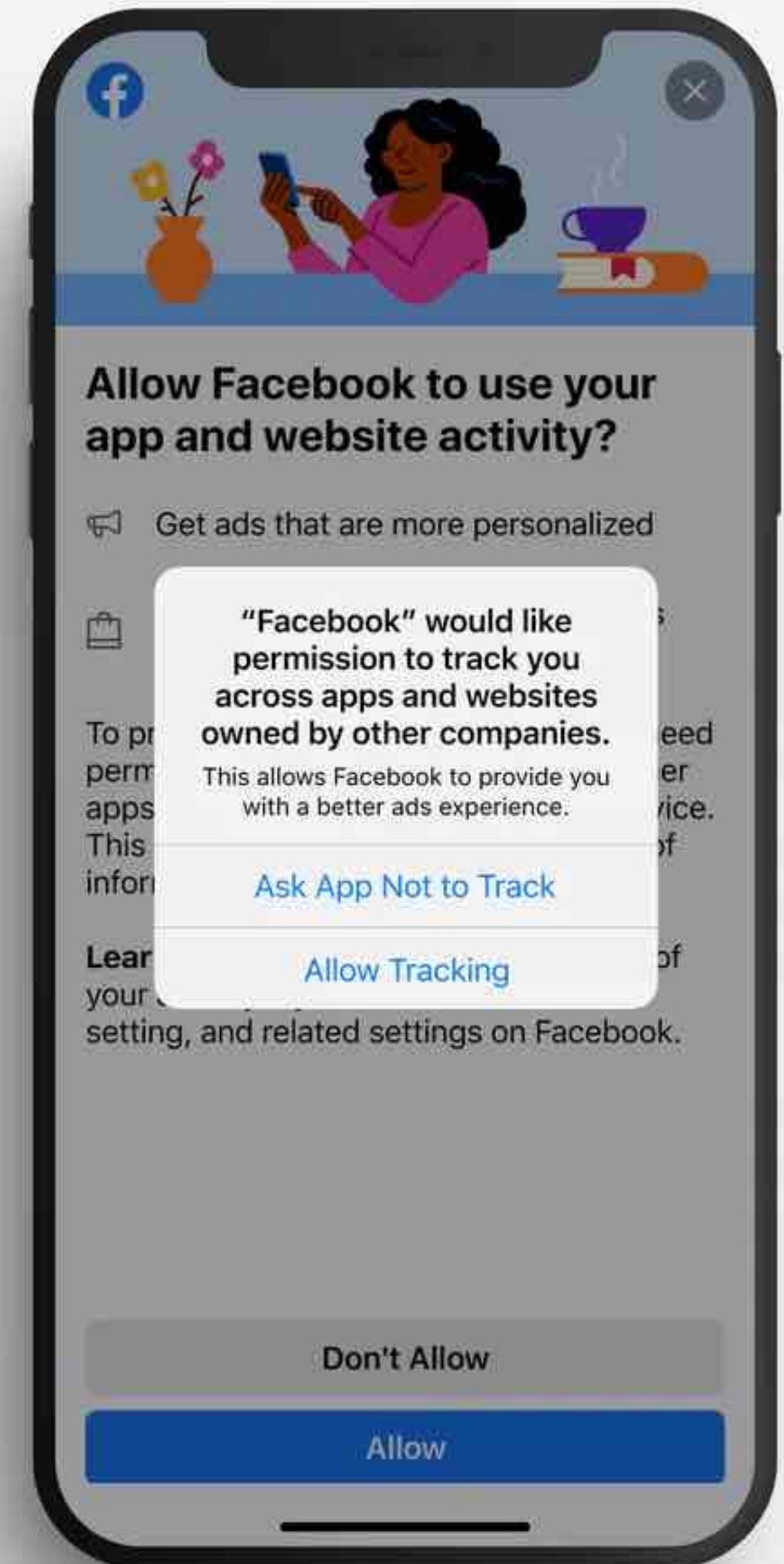
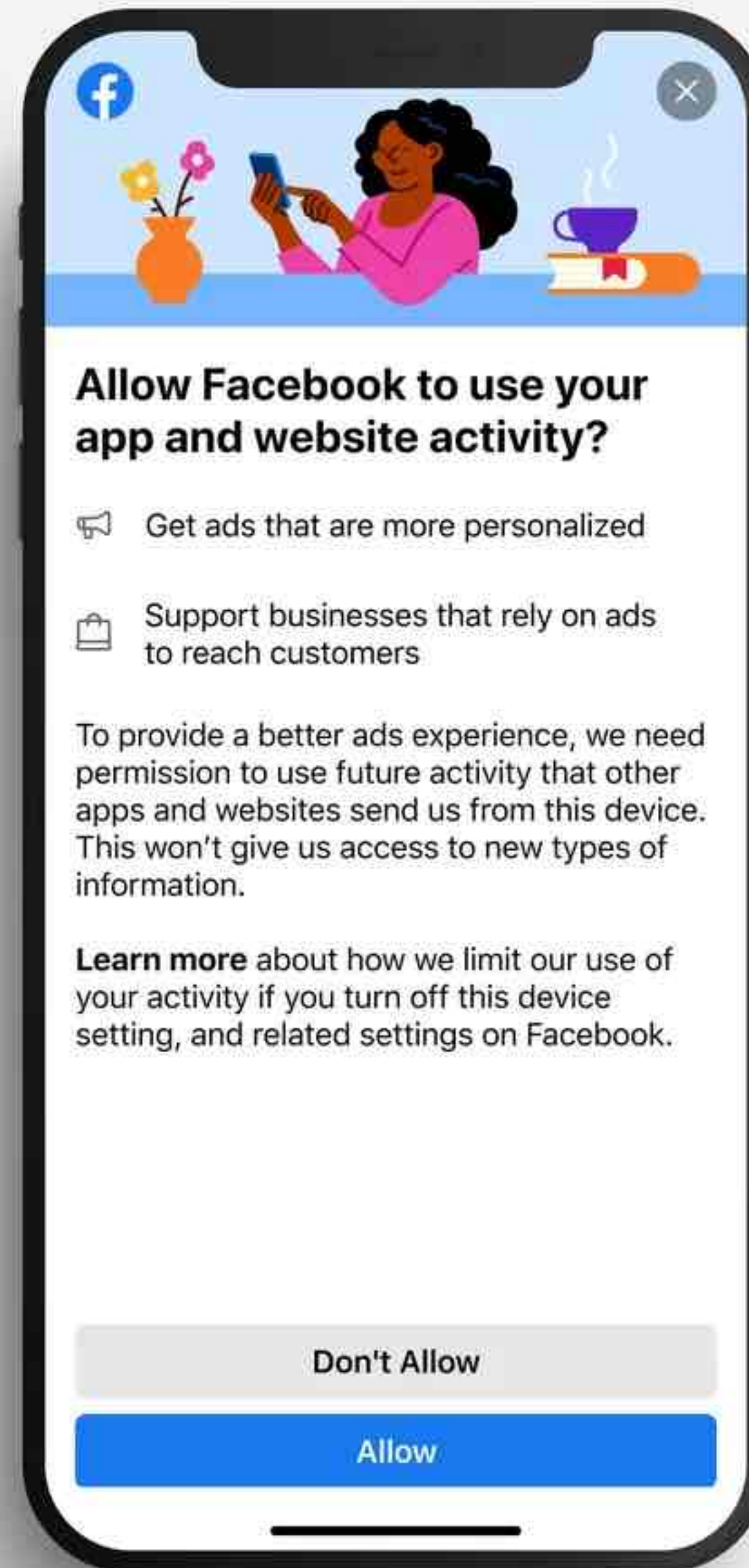


Image credits: Unsplash

The impact of iOS 14 update on social media advertising

Apple's latest update could severely limit the amount of data mobile apps can track by actively prompting users to decide if they want to deny tracking permission. The update has 3 major consequences for social networks, with Facebook being the most directly affected.

- Limitations to building **retargeting** audiences based off of pixel data
- Less tracking possibilities, reduced **attribution** measurement
- A data **reporting** delay from 24 to 72 hours, affecting reactive optimisations



10.

The Pursuit of Purpose.

> Brands engaging in socially-conscious conversations

Already spotted in our 2020 trends report, the socially-conscious posture that took social media by storm has reached new heights in 2021; seeking to make an impact not just on brands but also on politics and society as a whole through social media conversations.

Mental health, sustainability, inclusivity, social justice, gender parity, even politics, there is not a single talking point that can be ignored nowadays thanks to massive information (and disinformation) sharing on social platforms. Meaning that a growing amount of consumers (and not only youngsters) will expect brands to take a firm stand on these matters, even if it means breaking free from groups of old aficionados, as we've noticed with Nike's campaigns around BLM.

The truth is that there is no place for brands to hide from society issues anymore. Companies that haven't spoken out yet shouldn't see this as a barrier to entering the "uncomfortable" discussion but rather as an opportunity to stand out from the mushy middle and avoid facing criticism for a lack of position.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

More than a marketing exercise, brands can no longer ignore the growing voices from generations that have decided to bring purpose in the centre of their existence (which has been exacerbated by the pandemic crisis). Mission-led campaigns will connect with the audience on a more emotive level, creating stronger brand resonance and affinity.



Image credits: Unsplash

“
Together is how
we move forward.
Together is how
we make change.”

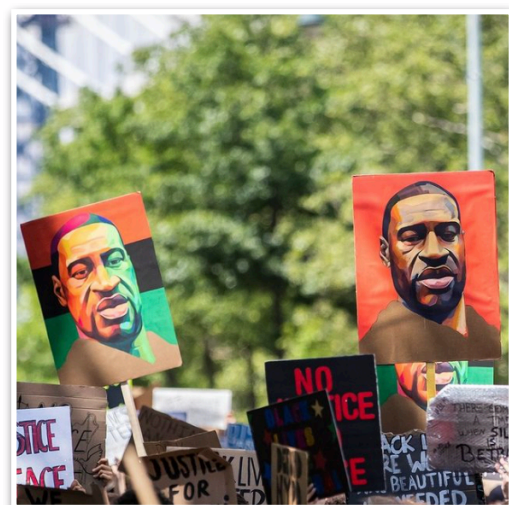
Adidas answering to Nike's post on Twitter "Let's all be part of the change" following George Floyd death in May 2020.



#matter

Highsnobiety

Hypebeast fashion media outlet Highsnobiety has been very vocal about society challenges and has deviated from its curated fashion editorial plan by integrating various posts putting into light topics such as politics, social justice, sustainability, etc. By looking at comments, this bold editorial shift have cause the brand to loose followers while it surely attracted new ones.



#solidarity

THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN THE WHOPPER.

There's Roti King, Sultan's palace, Tayyab's, Eco, Dumplings Legend, Ochi's, Damak, Platzki... In short, there are many great dishes from thousands of restaurants that deserve to be as famous as the Whopper®. As we head into tier three across more parts of the country, it's clear independent restaurants need all our support.

So, we've decided to give you a break from our burger pics and make our Instagram available to all these restaurants.

Until they can reopen, they can advertise on our Instagram for free.

Friends from the hospitality industry: if you want us to share your signature dish on Instagram, post it with [#WhopperAndFriends](#)



The disinformation

gap.

■ >> How fake news is polarising society on social media

Born out of presidential elections, debate or nationwide referendums lobbying, **fake stories** have proliferated so quickly and so deeply within our social platforms that even fake news checkers have a hard time differentiating the truth from lies. Public figures embracing fake facts makes it even more painful to fight.

While terrifying, when thinking how manipulated ideas could sway a large portion of society's perception, social platforms have put together more and more resources and features to mitigate the spread of disinformation before it gets (too) nasty: from COVID fact checks to the notorious ban of President Donald Trump from Twitter.

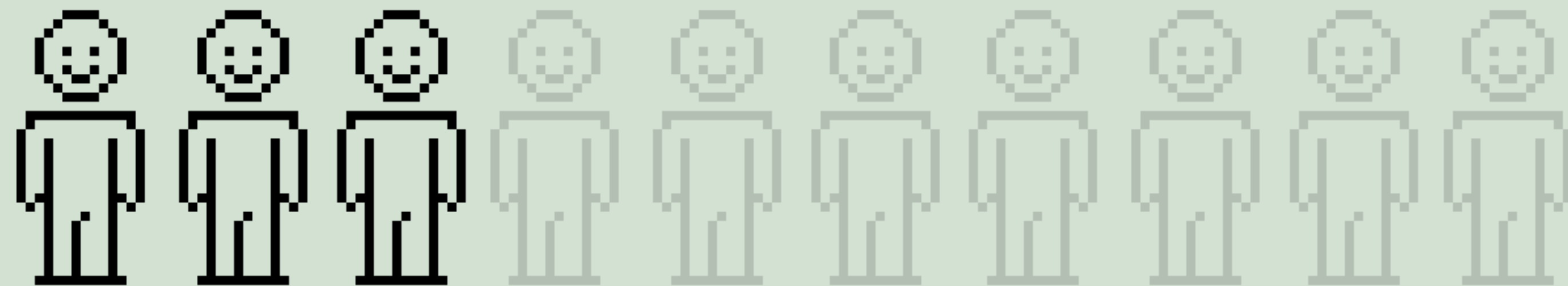
However, some view these solutions as band-aid on a much bigger problem: the extreme polarisation of society and the rebirth of social echo chambers.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

With more and more brands willing to take a stand on society issues, they may find themselves in front of vigorous internet-educated communities ready to unfollow, discredit or even negatively influence a brand's online reputation.

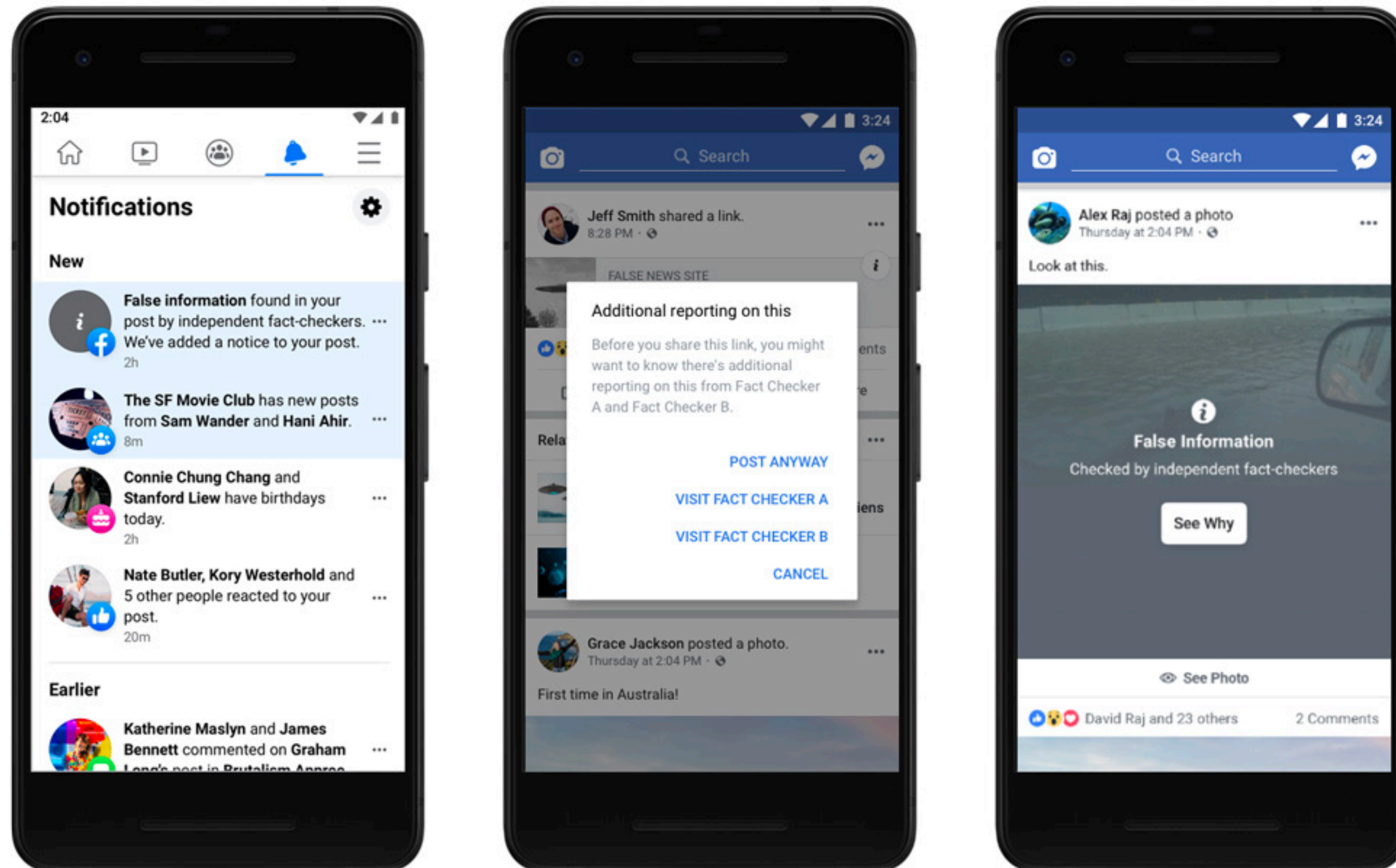


Image credits: Twitter



28% of Americans believe Bill Gates intends to microchip people using coronavirus vaccine.

Conducted by Yahoo News and YouGov, over 1,640 Americans were questioned about this possibility in the last week of May.



Facebook third-party fact-checking

Private company Facebook should not be the arbiters of truth and therefore rely on independent fact-checkers to identify and review potential misinformation, which enables taking action.

1

Human & signal based identification

Review through original reporting, public data and analyses of media

2

3

Action by surfacing fact-check articles and showing labels on top of falser stories

12.

Influencers @affiliates

>> Affiliate marketing entering the influence space

In 2021, social influencers will remain a driving force of performance marketing by adding a new line to their skill sets: working as **affiliates** on platforms such as Amazon or Instagram or apps similar to Storr.

Incorporating influencers allows brands to control important components such as calls-to-action, hashtags and social handles, while giving them a way to hand-select who represents them.

Obscure influencers affiliate networks have seen the light of day but lack of transparency in terms of inventory and tracking are good reasons to stay away from them and stick to trusted platforms that enable scale, precision, control and strong reporting features.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

If brands want to see long-term results from their affiliate marketing efforts, they must find ways to exert control over both the message and the messenger alike.



Image credits: Unsplash

“

It's my job to share beauty secrets and tips. I'm usually writing long, detailed captions about the latest products I've been using. Having this tool just makes it that much easier to let everyone know what I'm wearing and from where – down to the shade.

”

@saytheless about affiliate marketing programs

Custom storefront:

recommend thousands of products



Custom URLs: guide your audience through your recommendations

Livestreams: affiliate live shopping features

13.

The
new
lives
of
content.

>> Remixing content is the new cool

Remixing content capabilities have reached new heights with the usage explosion of TikTok, Reels by Instagram and Spark by Facebook. By reinterpreting formats and concepts, social users have found new tools that allow them to unleash their inner expression and creativity.

By nature, remixing doesn't imply heavy production skills which makes the trend accessible to virtually anyone equipped with a smartphone and a social account.

Light-hearted and easy to consume, this type of asset diverges from the overdose of (useless) content that drowns social feeds.

WHY IT MATTERS IN 2021

Leaning on this trend, brands will have the opportunity to co-create remixed content with their communities, by either supplying remix templates or pushing users to bring remixed content to life.



Image credits: TikTok



> Key take-aways

- _01. Social media users on the look out for valuable solutions amidst pandemic
- _02. The rise of Conversational Commerce
- _03. Brands exploring new in-game advertising territories
- _04. AI signals targeting making its way into social media
- _05. Facebook becoming a resourceful hub to accelerate SMBs digital transformation
- _06. The comeback of nostalgia marketing in uncertain times
- _07. Users and influencers becoming the new content production studios
- _08. Influencers pushing social commerce right here, right now, through live content
- _09. Social users trading data for convenience in a more complex tech environment
- _10. Brands engaging in socially-conscious conversations
- _11. How fake news is polarising society on social media
- _12. Affiliate marketing entering the influence space
- _13. Remixing content is the new cool

> Contributors

Sara Assi
Stefan Bisoux
Dimitri Cologne
Mathieu De Moor
Awie Erasmus
Mathieu Gillain
Gregory Ginterdaele
Mélanie Morales
Rogin Roldan
Catherine Sackville-Scott
Arnaud Vanhemelryck
Yannec Vermeeren
Britt Wernars

Social.Lab

For more information: arnaud.vanhemelryck@ogilvy.com