



# How COVID-19 Shifted Consumer Behavior



# Trends 101

## Trends 101

### WHAT

#### Revisiting Post-COVID

Back in 2020, we identified seven key trends that we believed would reflect the lasting impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

### WHY

#### Consumer Predictions

What will the imprint of this global pandemic be on people moving forward?

01

The Return of  
Expertise

02

From Me to We

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Accelerated  
Digitization

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Ambient  
Wellness

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Prada

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Human Era 2.0

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Compassion,  
Inc.





## The Return of Expertise

Do we heed the pleading voices  
of our experts or march to the  
beat of our own drum?

## RETURN TO EXPERTISE

### Trend Expectations

In 2020, we predicted our society would move from previously rejecting the words of experts to instead looking to leaders in business, politics, communities, health and more for advice, consolation and guidance. People were tuning into Dr. Anthony Fauci's and Governor Beshear's information sessions like they were hot gossip and seeking out information from credible news sources.

We determined that an appeal to expertise and creating content that showcases the credibility of a brand and the people behind it would score big with post-COVID consumers.



# One, two, three

## Trend Reality

1.

### Immediate Result

If Doe bet big on this trend, we likely would've lost our shiny new office.

2.


### Trust Bubble Bursts

Americans largely lost trust in their leading institutions. While our government and political and health leaders held the steady lead, the “trust bubble” burst around May 2020 and distrust grew rampant.

3.

### The “Info-demic”

With such an influx of information from all angles, people struggle to parse through the fact from the fiction, leading to deep sentiments of distrust, suspicion and hesitation – particularly as the U.S. tries to vaccinate the population.



“The effects of the coronavirus on the economy, GDP and consumer habits are widely predicted by politicians, statisticians, economists to be as deep and far-reaching as those experienced during, and after, the Second World War.”

Campaign  
May 13, 2020

TREND REALITY

## Struggles Against Leadership



Protests broke out across states against government shutdown, quarantining measures and, more recently, vaccine implementation.

As the pandemic continued without an end, people became more agitated with the response of leadership.

# What Now?

## Rebuilding trust

While mistrust has largely been centered on government entities, citizens look to private businesses to fill the void of leadership they feel.

For our work, this means rising to new demands of societal engagements with corporations – people believe CEOs should speak out and take a stand on societal issues, particularly when the government is failing.

## Appeal with thoughtful trust

It doesn't do anyone any good to act like you have all the answers, but leading with facts and acting with empathy can begin the journey of rebuilding trust with the community, starting internally and moving externally.

02

## From Me to We

There's no "I" in team,  
but there is a "me."

FROM ME TO WE

## Trend Expectations

Faced with times of distance and solitude, we predicted in 2020 that consumer sentiment would shift to become more community-focused instead of individual-focused. For so long, we had been focused on ourselves and our own health and wellness. The pandemic taught us that we can only win if everyone wins. Consumers rose to the challenge and leaned into community support systems to get them through tough times. We believed brands should embrace this idea as well and seek to foster connection and build community among consumers.



# One, two, three

## Trend Reality

1.

### Immediate Result

Just enough to break even. We saw an outpour of giving, uplifting and just good 'ol being there for one another during those tumultuous few months of lockdown, enforced social distancing and toilet paper hoarding.

2.

### Temporary Community

Now, however, people have largely become accustomed to this new normal. And while we do care about the people around us (sometimes), we've somewhat pulled back from the shift of me to we.

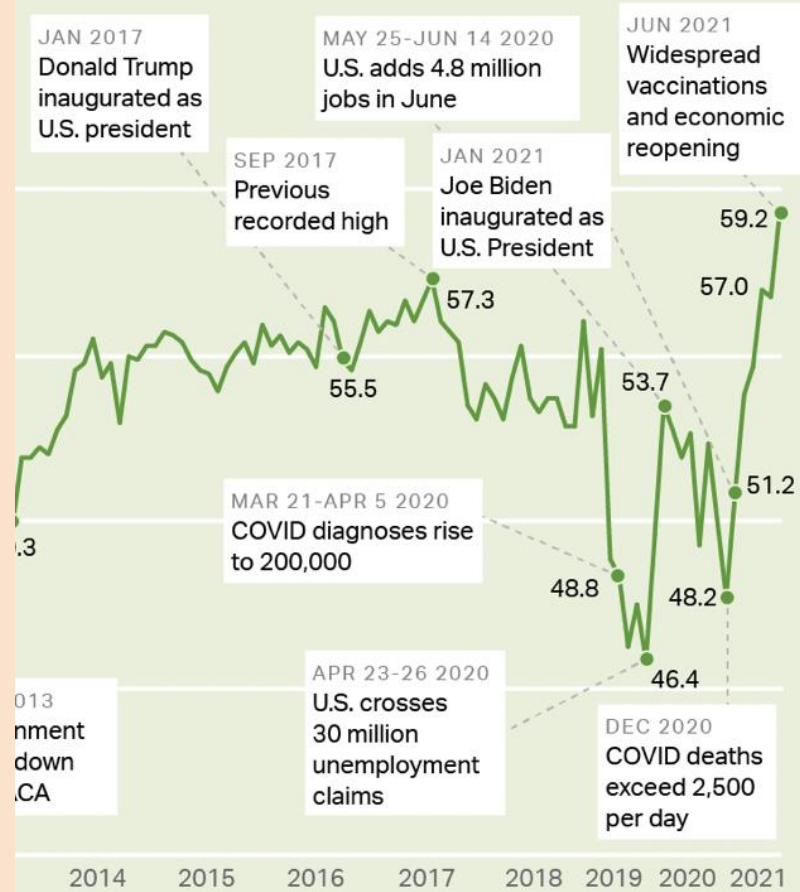
3.

### Tensions

During quarantine we have seen a tension between individual responsibility (i.e., hoarding toilet paper) and collective responsibility (i.e., staying home to protect the vulnerable).

# Thriving, Struggling or Suffering?

TREND REALITY



based on the Gallup National Health and Well-Being Index from 2013 to June 20, 2021 (excepting August), are from the Gallup National Health and Well-Being Index. The index is known to be highly convergent, allowing for

Gallup's most recent Life Evaluation Index, captured in June 2021, saw that 59.2% of Americans believed they were thriving in life.

Getting vaccinated, going to more events and doing the things we used to do have brought Americans immense happiness and invoked the feeling of "thriving."

But what about the people who aren't thriving?

TREND REALITY

# Partisanship in a Pandemic



Bipartisanship may play a larger role in reconciling tensions as we move into a post-COVID world. According to Pew Research, partisan gaps on measures such as closing K-12 schools for in-person learning or asking people to avoid large gatherings have grown much wider since March 2020.

With no clear-cut end in sight, it's important for communication to be mindful of the social tensions still in place in many areas of bipartisanship.

# What Now?

## Show patience

Communities are caught in limbo.

Brands can recognize that many folks want to return to normal ways of life and find their community again. Others may prefer to stick to virtual, no-contact ways of living out of fear or apprehension of moving too fast.

Regardless, we all enjoyed and bonded together when we had each other's backs, and emphasizing the communities we can build for ourselves – wherever we are – can be an all-encompassing message to employ at this time.

OS

## Accelerated Digitization

American convenience culture is  
reaching new heights.

## ACCELERATED DIGITIZATION

### Trend Expectations

Back in 2020, faced with unprecedented barriers, we predicted that COVID-19 would bring about a phase of accelerated digitization, where consumers rapidly adopted and adjusted to high-level technologies utilized in a virtual and distanced world.

It was hard to adjust to at first – remember those moments of “Oops, I was unmuted!” or “How do I share my screen?” We predicted brands would ride the proverbial wave and embrace new opportunities to improve the customer experience and, in turn, customers would rise to the new opportunities to get acquainted.



# One, two, three

## Trend Reality

1.

### Immediate Result

A pretty solid payout! Maybe we'll collect our earnings in Dogecoin.

2.

### Continued Digital Updates

We have grown accustomed to the new technologies we adopted at the start of the pandemic and have begun to expect new ones.

3.

### A New Normal

It's likely we won't abandon all semblance of our digital world, even in the space of event hosting – especially in food delivery services.

TREND REALITY  
**Recent Pandemic Innovations**



Starbucks' seamless ordering from social media – to make online ordering that much quicker.

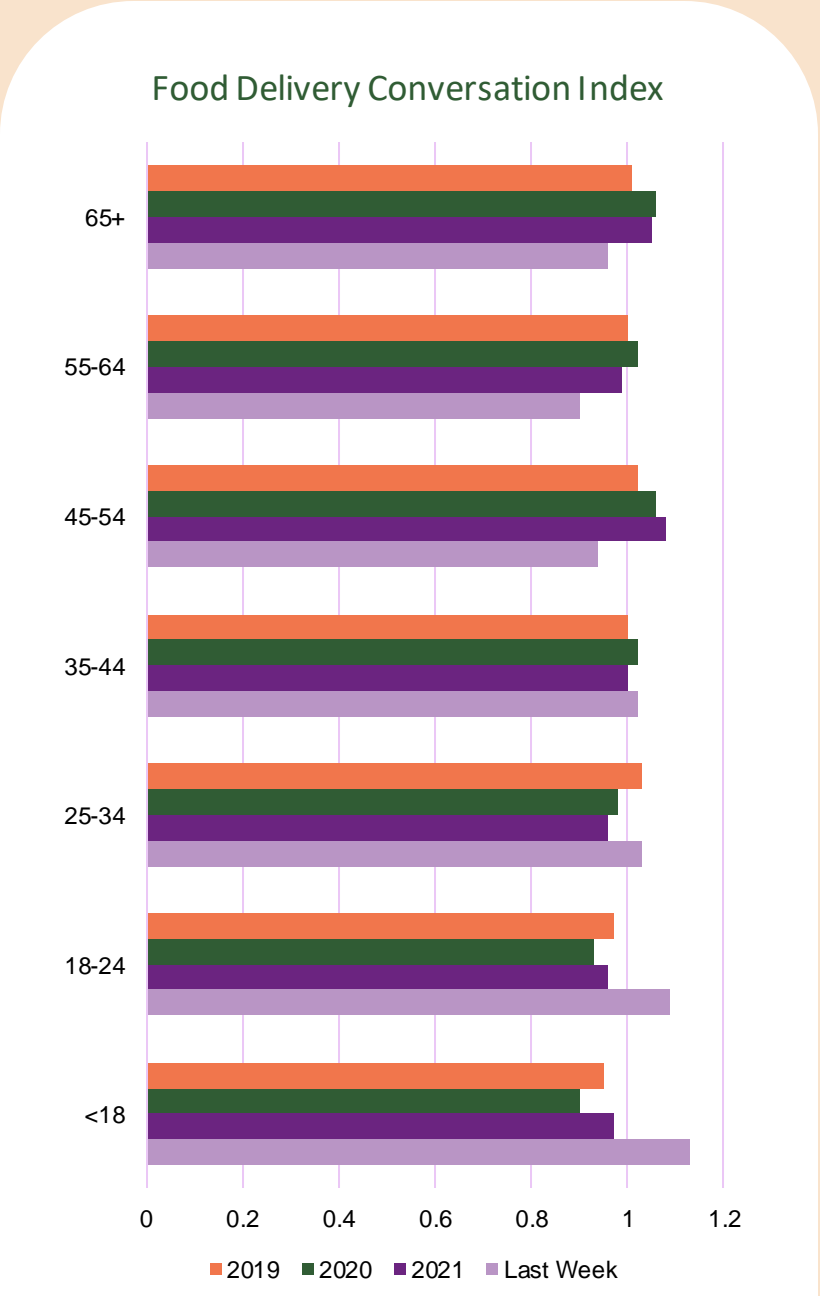


The image shows a video player interface. The main video frame displays a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a dark blue sweater, smiling on a stage. A large blue play button is centered over the video. Below the main frame is a red banner with the text "Adobe SUMMIT" in white. Underneath the banner are three smaller video thumbnails, each with a play button. The first thumbnail is labeled "M Playbook", the second "21 mins Experience Cloud", and the third "9 mins Tom Brady's P".

Virtual-experience entertainment opportunities – to bring the unique experience of traveling to the comfort of your own city.

# Food Delivery Index

TREND REALITY



Between March–April 2019 and 2020, consumers above the ages of 35 recorded increases in conversation surrounding food delivery services such as UberEats, DoorDash, etc.

# What Now?

## Keep riding the wave

Consumers have welcomed and become accustomed to digital innovation in new ways as a result of the pandemic. Many look appreciatively on brands that look outside the box to come up with new ways to better the customer experience and wouldn't mind trying a new service if they believe it'll improve their lifestyle.

This presents an opportunity for brands to embrace emerging technology to improve the consumer experience.

04

## Ambient Wellness

Investing in your health has  
never been more important.

## AMBIENT WELLNESS

### Trend Expectations

We predicted that going through a pandemic would push consumers to become more health- and wellness-conscious, prompting brands to also adapt health-forward positioning and product offerings. From wearable tech to new sanitization methods and just a greater emphasis on taking care of yourself, we believed becoming more health-oriented would be beneficial for any brand, regardless of industry.



# One, two, three

## Trend Reality

1.

### Immediate Result

Ding ding ding!

As we move into the recovery period of the pandemic, health technology – and a general emphasis on personal health – will continue to dominate.

2.

### New innovations

Users look to resources to help with adjusting to the new normal or just continue with the innovations they liked from during the pandemic.

3.

### Brandwagon

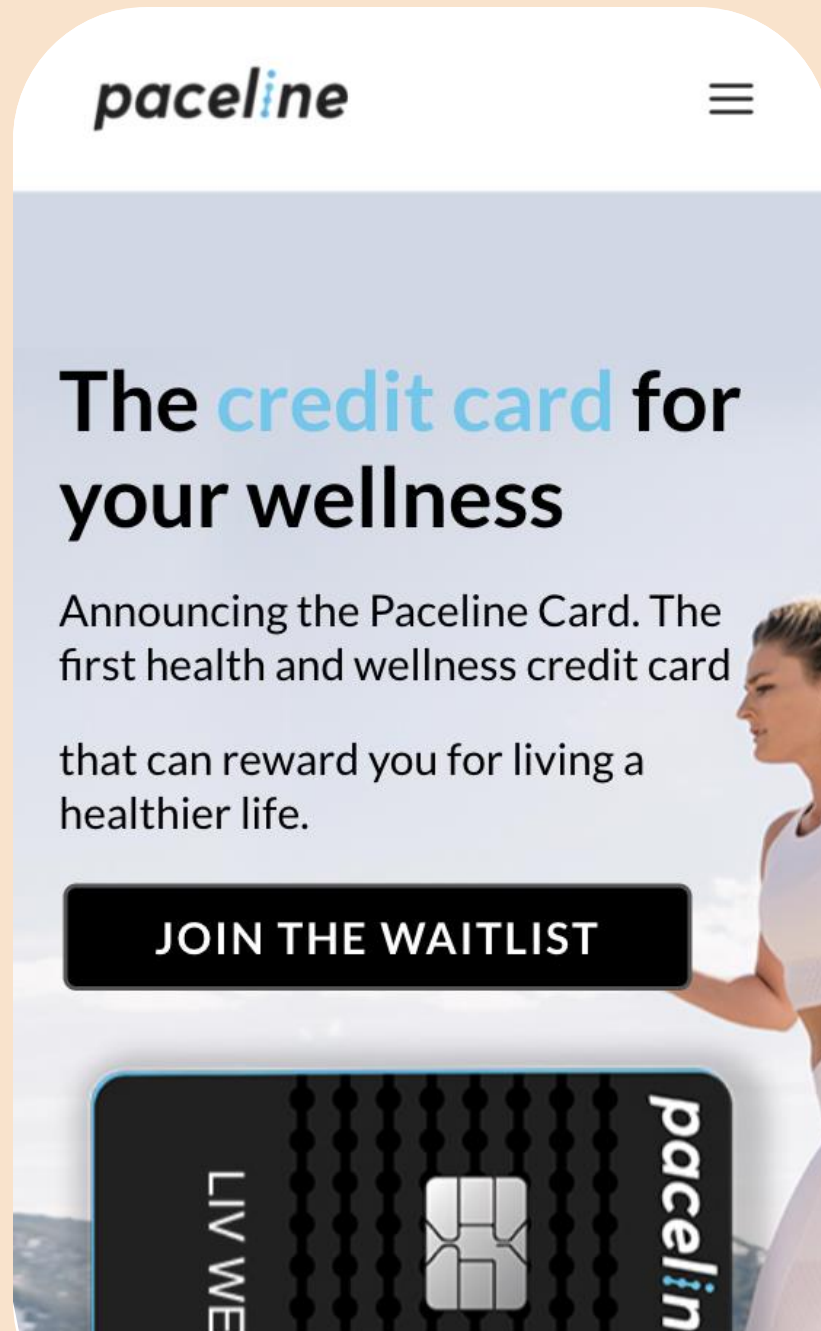
Health is wealth, always.

From partnering with mental wellness apps like Headspace to brand-integrated physical health programs, brands have hopped on the bandwagon of health-first mindset.

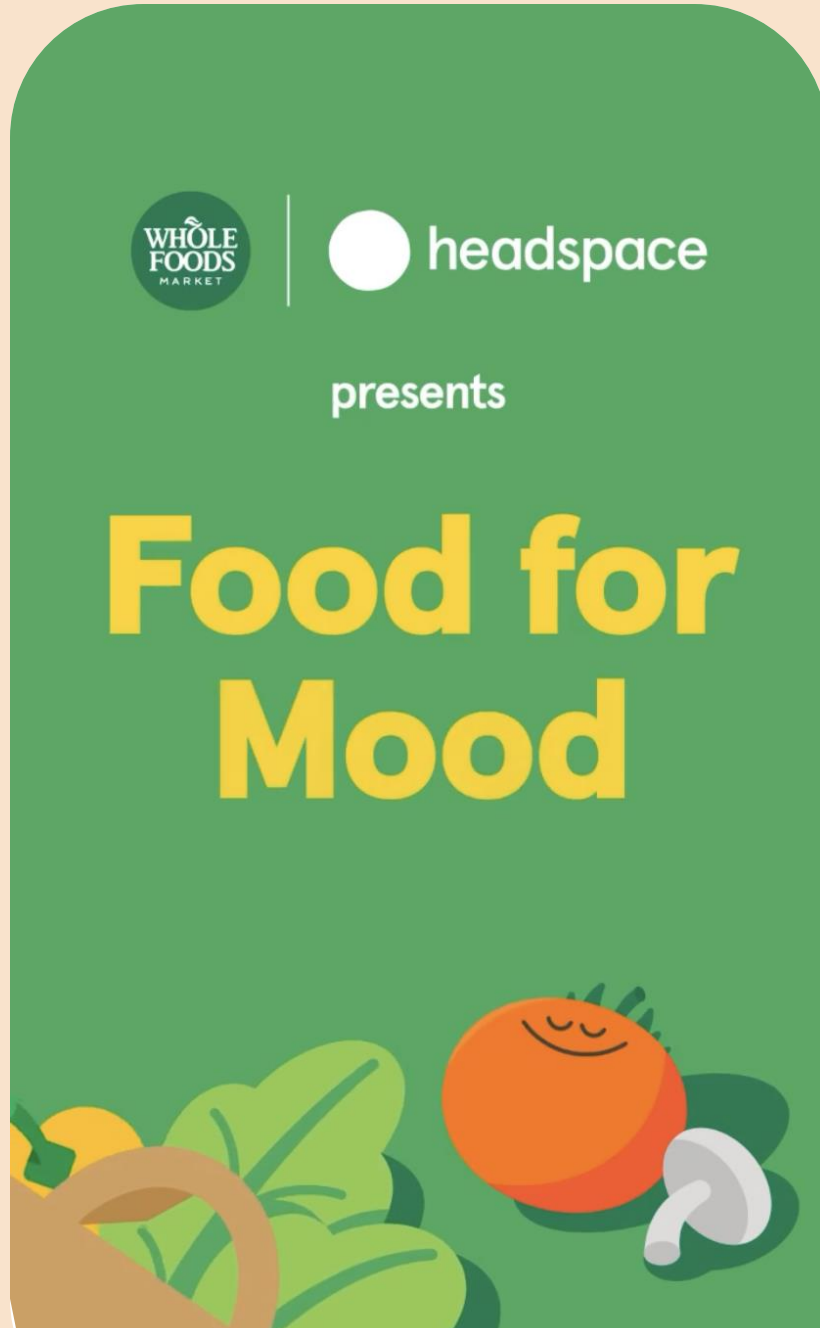
TREND REALITY  
Pandemic Innovations



Wearable technology allows employers to track mental health and well-being of employees during remote working

A mobile app interface for the Paceline Card. The top header features the 'paceline' logo in a sans-serif font with a blue dot over the 'i', and a hamburger menu icon to its right. Below the header, the main headline reads 'The credit card for your wellness', with 'credit card' in blue and 'for your wellness' in black. A sub-headline follows: 'Announcing the Paceline Card. The first health and wellness credit card that can reward you for living a healthier life.' To the right of this text is a partial view of a woman in a white athletic top. Below the text is a black button with white text that says 'JOIN THE WAITLIST'. At the bottom, a portion of the Paceline Card is visible, showing a black card with a white chip, the 'pacelin' logo, and the text 'LIV WE'.

The world's first health and wellness credit card, where users can earn rewards by logging physical activity, has arrived



Whole Foods Market teamed up with Headspace to showcase the effects of certain foods on moods and overall well-being.

## What Now?

### Put yourself in their shoes

Think expansively about where, when and how customers interact with your brand and the impact that interaction has on all aspects of their physical and mental well-being.

Can you offer health-boosting measures within the environments the customers pass through?

### Innovate to alleviate

Can you offer something entirely health-positive – even playful – that aligns with the brand positioning?

05

## Preparedness Is the New Prada

“Be prepared” is not just a  
Boy Scout mantra anymore.

PREPAREDNESS IS THE NEW PRADA

## Trend Expectations

During the time of our predictions, preparedness and an emphasis on prioritizing prevention of COVID-19 was top of mind everywhere. Consumers were going the extra mile to follow the herd and stay prepared and safe from the virus – for some, this included finding fun and new ways to stay distanced and safe, like stylish masks and TikTok challenges. It was fashionable to show that you were prepared and doing the right thing – not doing so meant a loss in social currency or a feeling of shame in social situations. We suggested brands follow this trend by prioritizing prevention in their own business models and making staying safe and well part of the brand experience.



# One, two, three

## Trend Reality

1.

### Immediate Result

Yes, no, maybe so!

The social trend of staying within the “it” crowd by showcasing how prepared and safe you were being has morphed into larger movements stemming from pandemic-era social suppression.

2.

### Superiority Complex

Being inside and distanced from people has deprived many of social encounters IRL – resulting in 2.0 versions of moments showcasing social hierarchy, whether that’s within the vaccines you receive, the clothes you choose to wear or the belief you choose to showcase.

3.

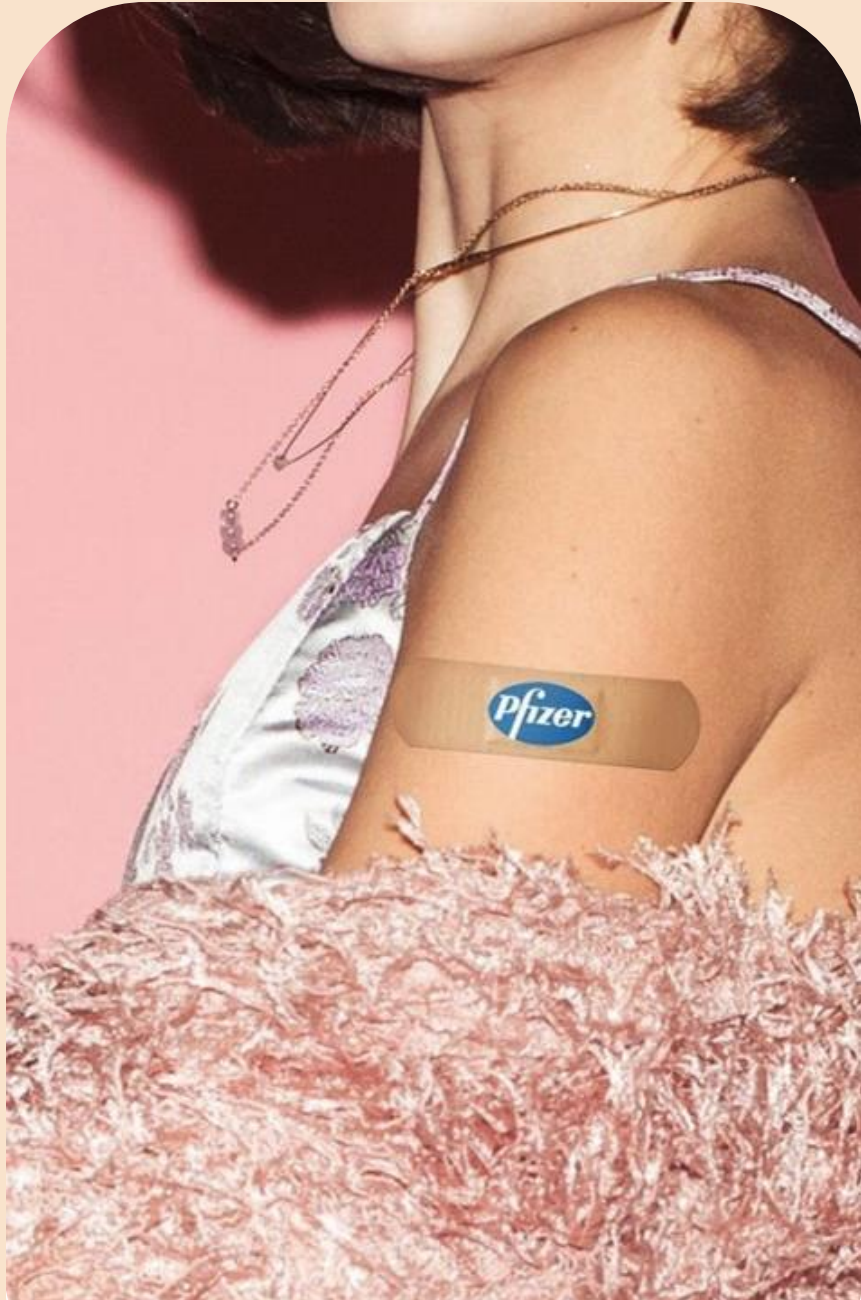
### Relaxing Standards

People are over having to uphold a strict visual standard and dress code.

The tension here lies between those who wish to return to the way things were before and those who are content with defining a new normal path.

## TREND REALITY

# Vaccines as a Social “In”



While fundamentally the vaccines don't really differ, the Internet divided itself between Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson options. A person signing up to get vaccinated doesn't really have the choice of picking which vaccine they get, but it's fun to join in on Internet trends and say you're officially part of the #PfizerGang or #TeamModerna.

TREND REALITY  
**Vaccines as a Social “In”**



Some individuals in Missouri (which currently has a 41% vaccination rate) have reportedly been dressing in disguise to receive COVID-19 vaccinations and have been pleading with doctors not to reveal they were vaccinated. This behavior likely stems from concerns of not following the social norm in certain towns/areas.

While the social currency in some areas is to join the #PfizerGang, this is clearly not the case throughout the country.

TREND REALITY

## What Are You Wearing?!



In New York, the lines between dressing up for city life and dressing down for casual days indoors have been blurred. In a city where street style and image culture are typically integral parts of the social climate, folks see no need to continue to present a dolled-up version of themselves to the outside world because we've spent almost two years becoming, frankly, more comfortable with our normal, resting selves.

# What Now?

## Social cognizance

Frankly, consumers are grappling with a number of social tensions – to wear or not to wear masks, to get vaccinated or to not get vaccinated, to return to normal or to adapt to the present?

## Unify, don't divide

Brands should try to understand the last thing consumers want is yet another point of discussion or debate. Be cognizant of the social climate and create content that is appealing and applicable to all. Recognize that with so much uncertainty, even now, consumers will appreciate a brand that is firm, steady and compassionate for all.



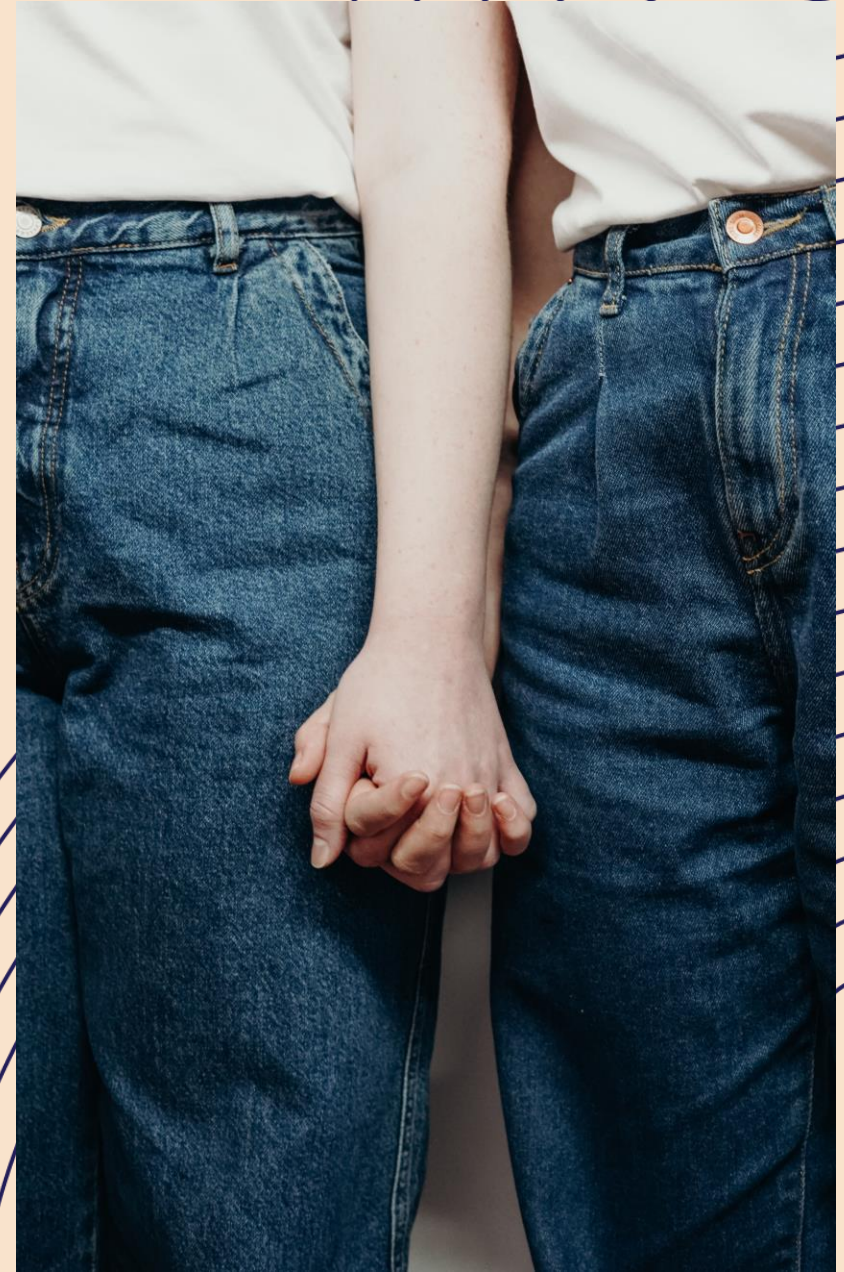
## Human Era 2.0

Disasters shock us into remembering  
our shared humanity.

HUMAN ERA 2.0

## Trend Expectations

Juggling work, family and life has never been easy, and the pandemic has only made those important connections all the more necessary to cultivate. We predicted, in the aftershock of the pandemic, consumers would respond highly to brands that appeal to the human-ness of us all. We wanted to know the brands we support keep it real and understand us as human beings – instead of sharing plastic-y impersonal communications. This required authenticity, passion and personality.



# One, two, three

## Trend Reality

1.

### Immediate Result

Increasingly aware that personality, purpose and profit can be compatible, consumers seek brand relationships that go beyond the superficial and transactional.

2.


### “Human” Branding

Users will embrace brands with meaning and character – that are open, honest, sympathetic and – most important – stand *for* something.

3.

### Brands Are People, Too

Well, not exactly. But people *get it*. Brands are run by people. And those people are locked in the same human experience.



“This is a moment for people to be in authentic places, and we need that kind of authenticity. People are reaching in. They are not polishing their avatars.”

Sherry Turkle

Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at M.I.T.

TREND REALITY  
“Human” Branding



Peloton leans into the humanity of its brand by emphasizing the collective community it cultivates through its offerings.



HBOMax could have easily apologized and moved on, but being frank with its audience about how its mistake came to be ushered in a slew of positive and encouraging messages.

## What Now?

### Let's get genuine

If there's anything consumers have become frantically aware of during these last few years, it's our own fleeting mortality. Disasters do shock us into remembering our shared humanity, and brands that recognize that and get real about the struggles they face internally and externally will find they reap benefits in forging meaningful connections with people.

Showing that a company is more than just some robots behind a screen – and instead made up of authentic human beings who live and breathe just the same as everyone else – means so much more for a consumer looking to find a brand to believe in.



## Compassion, Inc.

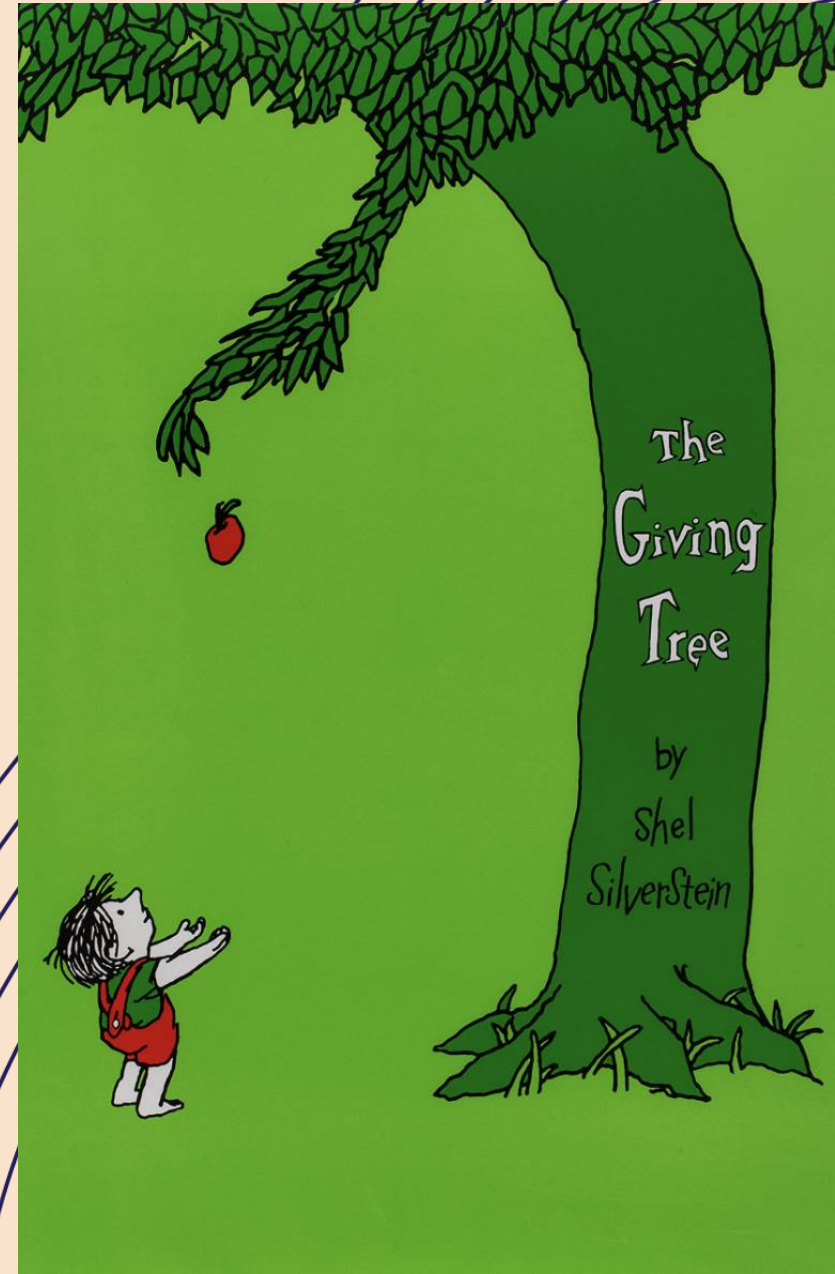
Taking a stance.

Now, making a change.

COMPASSION, INC.

## Trend Expectations

In the face of the pandemic, we predicted brands would be met with a crossroads of continuing as they were or committing to making big and bold changes to appease consumers who now demand more from the brands they support. No longer are broader social movements optional for brands to take part in. Meaningful change as well as empathy and authenticity exhibited by brands are looked highly upon by consumers.



# One, two, three

## Trend Reality

1.

### Immediate Result

We hit the nail on the head. Social listening shows shifts in consumer conversations regarding corporations and their decisions to make changes.

2.


### Pick a Side

Consumers don't prefer brands that purposefully stay vague and neutral on social issues. Companies that take a stand and commit to meaningful action appeal to those with aligned views.

3.

### Accountability

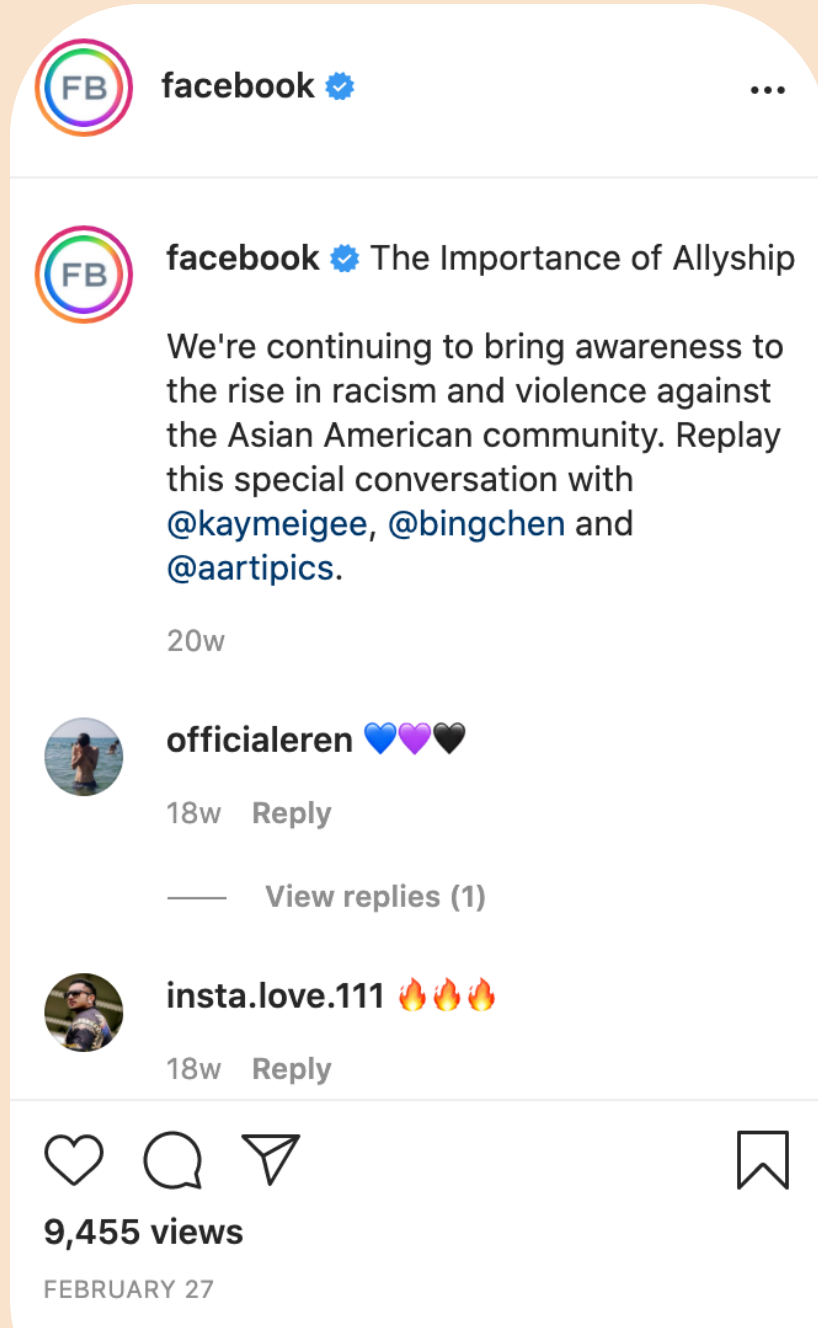
Many brands have shifted to making lofty commitments on initiatives they intend to pursue, people they intend to hire and changes they intend to make. The real impact on consumer behavior comes when brands can show they can act on those goals.



“A true brand purpose shouldn’t be another messaging coat that can be slipped over the existing brand architecture – it’s an action-oriented strategy that can only be achieved and have true credibility when it creates real change that people value.”

Simon Callender  
The Drum Network

TREND REALITY  
Consumers Want Accountability



Sometimes, it's not about being perfect and checking every box, but instead about letting people know you're still working on it and taking the steps to get there in the end.

TREND REALITY

# Social Media Sees Through All



Many social users vocalized thoughts on former Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos's space mission as a waste of money and resources that could have been put toward improving working conditions in Amazon facilities.

# What Now?

## True brand purpose

Brand purpose is only realized through action and meaningful impact. Without the actionable aspect of the concept, all you have is a boardroom strategy.

Customers have access to so much information and are particularly good at picking out hollow and false attempts by a brand to declare purpose and vision.

## Get to work

Brands should see purpose as a long-term commitment, not a short-term fling.

It demands consistency and authenticity to elevate the brand to a true purposeful scale and see those values through.

POST-COVID CONSUMER TRENDS

# Thanks!

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