



CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT & INTERACTIONS - POST COVID

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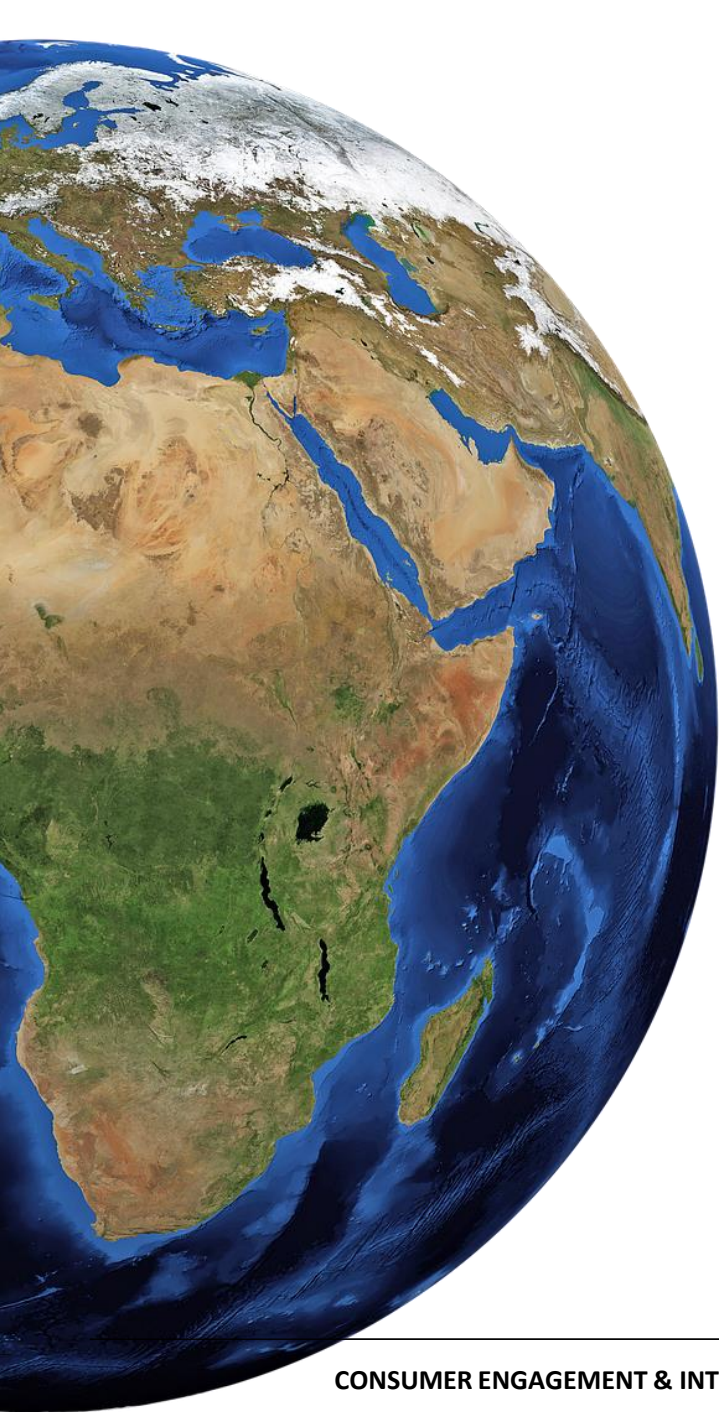
Consumer Engagements
& Interactions in a Post
COVID World

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WHAT IS THE NEW NORMAL?





Life has changed beyond recognition for most customers in 2020 and brands and corporations need to consider the changes that have taken place over the long term and the effect on their media investments.

How will consumer engagement be in times of change? Changes in media consumption during the lock-down were inevitable. The fact that we were required to stay at home had a significant effect on the type of media people could access and the amount of time we had to do so. What are brands to do now?

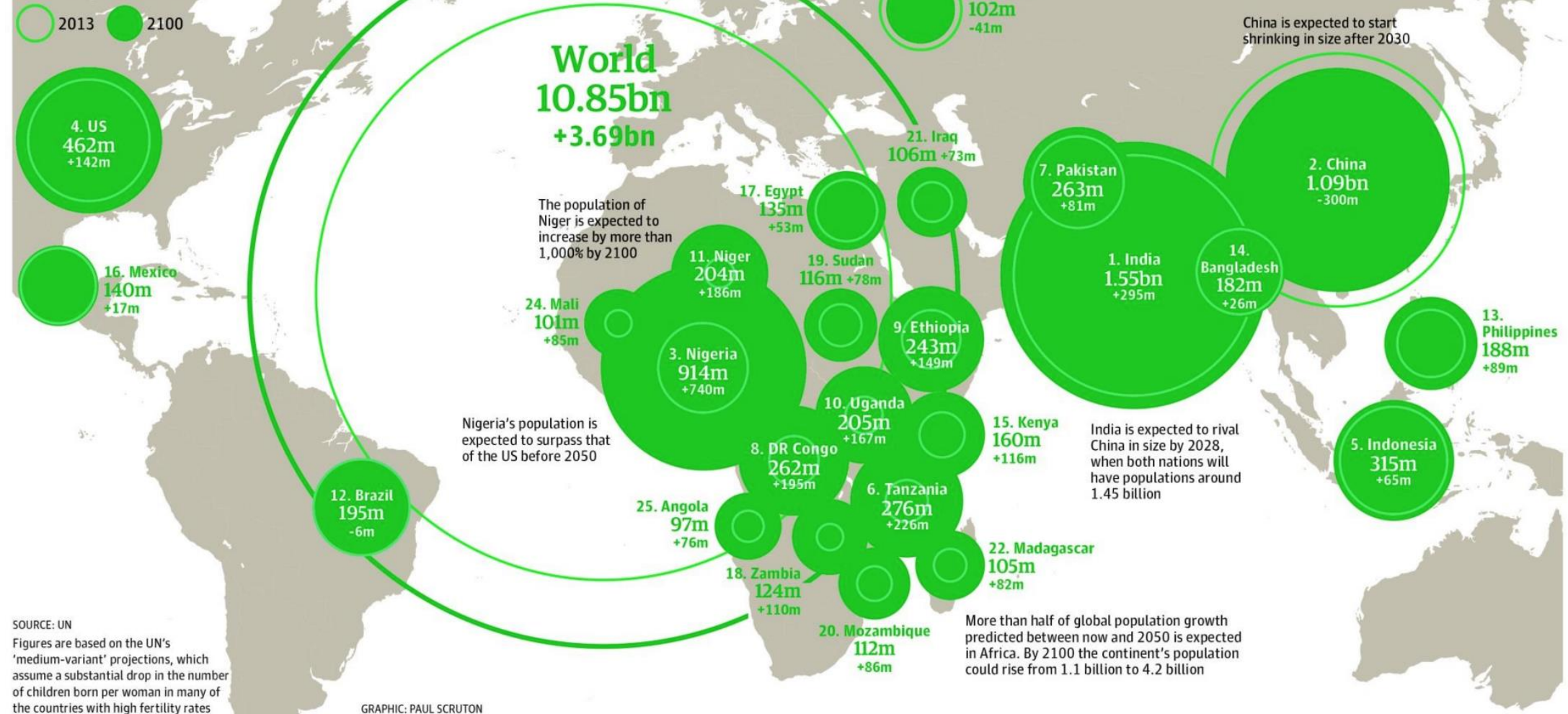
More than ever, brands and corporations need to consider what consumers are doing, what they are thinking and planning now, and how the rest of the industry is reacting. But, crucially, they need to know how to get ahead of the changes so that they're able to be there when customers start searching again! The business needs to be adaptable, responsive and in real time – ready to 'turn' when the market demands it.



HAS THE FUTURE WE USED TO PLAN FOR CHANGED?

Major populations in 2100

Estimated populations for the world's 25 most populous countries in 2100 showing increases from 2013



NIGERIA: 914,000,000

AFRICA: 4,200,000,000



**SHOULD BRANDS
DO MORE TO BUILD CONSUMER
ENGAGEMENT?
OWNED? PAID?
COLLABORATIVE?**



STORYTELLING

CONTENT

ENGAGEMENT

ANALYTICS

AI

IT'S ALL ABOUT PLATFORMS, LISTENING & PROMPTNESS

Switch to Digital?



The pandemic accelerated the digital revolution already underway in most of the business sectors. There have been predictions that anywhere in 2021, an operational model will be vital for businesses to successfully emerge from COVID-19." This refers in particular to promotions, branding and corporate communications. Both internal and external campaigns must be digitalised. The rush to digital activity has obvious implications, including greater focus on digital security, and the automation of routine activities that free people from higher-touch communications.

This also means exposure of brands to big issues like cancel culture and misrepresentation of messaging





Transparency, accountability and truthfulness

In the world of 'fake news' and self-appointed (yet sometimes quite successful and influential) digital citizen watchdogs, communication 'spin' is an increasingly dangerous tactic. Top organizations describe their point of differentiation by building trust.

Telling your story authentically and in terms that appeal to the personal experiences of customers is a tactic that will make the brand more transparent and consistent in the global fog of misinformation.

This can be done by creating relationships with customers on social media. Being friendly and personable toward consumers and engaging in real conversations with them, proudly communicating their privacy and data protection policies. Swiftly admitting to mistakes and keeping promises to correct them being transparent with pricing and other parts of the customer journey.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

The strategies and practices for attracting organic traffic from search engines, will be a key focus for communicators . With social media algorithms being so volatile and risky, and the media noise being so paramount, many organisations will be forced to take a step back and look at how they can have the audience come to them — instead of the other way around. So much corporate content doesn't even make it into SERP top 100 — despite the content itself being relevant in many cases. Well-developed practices for inbound marketing alone won't be sufficient in 2021. Being able to earn top SERP positions for relevant search phrases won't just be great PR, it'll be a core business asset for any organisation. Communicators will have to team up with SEO specialists and start to work closely together — for the long-term.



Marketing and corporate communications will overlap

There has always been a friction between marketing and PR/communications in large corporations. This is because both compete for the budget and because marketing is seen as a proactive discipline responsible for driving growth, while communication is considered to be more protective, involving crisis management and reputation management. The smartest businesses would ensure that both operate in unison to fulfil consumer standards for values based on marketing and communication.

It's not recent, of course, but all evidence points to the continued pressure on companies to align their marketing and communication with corporate standards beyond diversity, fairness and inclusion. 2020 has seen a lot of norm-shattering, and just some of it is for the better. We have deep differences over culture, politics, and even the essence of an objective reality.

Loss of confidence in institutions means that companies will have a greater role to play in voicing brand and corporate values than ever before.



Internal Communications

Remote Work Is Here to Stay: Organizations that facilitate remote work and combine it with accessible corporate messaging will do a better job of keeping employees focused and productive.

Employees Want Transparency and Clear, Trusted Guidance: Trusted, accurate information puts people at ease and allows them to turn their attention and skills toward the future. Rather than living with false confidence that all is well, leaders and employees alike can get started on working through problems.

Organizations are increasingly dependent on the Digital Workplace: Rapid workplace evolution is necessitating the implementation of modern tools that can effectively keep all employees fully informed as more of them move out from under a single corporate roof.

Internal Comms Is Gaining Bottom-Line Relevance: The strengthened contribution of internal comms from commercial, operational, and organizational perspectives has been evidenced by its starring role in crisis management.

The empirical value provided by modern communication tools has also helped to back up the relevance of internal communications efforts.

Omnichannel Approach

Customers want businesses to have a consistent voice across all channels. A lot of businesses have been working towards this in recent years, but now it's more of an expectation than a "nice to have." Customers may demand consistent service and become irritated if they are handled differently on Twitter than by email. They will also become irritated if they have to continuously repeat their customer data or problems, they face each time they approach your company via a different channel. The data should be followed by the customer wherever they go. Omnichannel channels are perfect for that!

We expect more businesses to turn to the omnichannel in 2021 and step away from the silo strategy.

Brands ought to provide an effective omnichannel media presence

To influence customers through the tunnel. They've got to go beyond.



Omnichannel Approach (cont'd)

Top-funnel behaviours and use data to enable users through the entire social media enclosure. And they need to understand the role of retail media in raising awareness and consideration. These new market trends would make it possible for small insurgent brands, such as Perfect Diary, to expand and gain share from the incumbents. To overcome this, incumbents need to be more flexible and use community-based networks such as Facebook Shop and WeChat Social eCommerce in combination with influencers during promotion times. Brands will need to re-imagine, directly-to-consumer, an omnichannel approach to have the right consumer experience.



Influencers

Broad spectrum influencers who had a mainstream appeal, but no clear relation to the product or service they were selling, are losing their influence. Instead, micro-influencers are a new conduit to your niche audience. Establishing a relationship with a micro-influencer who is actively interested in your service or product – even if they only have, say, 50,000 followers – is likely to have more impact for you than a prominent influencer, with half a million followers who have no real relation to you, your product or service.

Emerging digital platforms will become more relevant in the sense of holistic marketing techniques and overall media strategy, as brands adopt more authentic and more direct ways to connect with customers. Influencers can be used as a long-term strategic opportunity rather than a short-term strategy. Brands and companies must understand the impact of an interconnected, integrated vision across all platforms and forms and transcend the internal silos in order to leverage their communication and digital capabilities. This will encourage them to be more dynamic in their media planning and open-minded about the pay-as-you-go landscape and how platforms, content and disciplines can build something bigger than their pieces.



Always Include the Brand & Comms teams in the Corporate Planning Table

Telling the company story is more important than ever to achieve strategic objectives. Top-performing organizations no longer create plans and then ask their marketing departments to deliver them, they include communications in the initial planning process. The strategic thinking ability of the top communication operators is recognized for its importance at the top table, not just in the 'delivery' department.



POST COVID : A NEW BEGINNING

