



2021 Global Marketing Trends

Find your focus

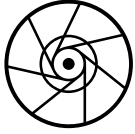
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Contents



Introduction

2

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THROUGHOUT HISTORY, MOMENTS of crisis and uncertainty have galvanized new innovations and shifted views on what matters most to people. The 1918 pandemic popularized the use of the telephone so much that the people-powered switch operators couldn't keep up.¹ In the Cold War era, the rise of televisions in households directly influenced how people perceived conflict at a time when the Vietnam War became the world's "First Televised War."² And, more recently, as issues of climate change and gender equality took centerstage, people began to demand more from businesses.³

Now, we are confronted with an amalgamation of uncertainty—and the world is collectively looking for answers. With an omnipresent pandemic, we had to find new ways to socialize in a world where social distancing quickly became the norm; work had to be redesigned so people could do their jobs

safely and productively; grocery shopping, dining out, education, and medical treatment fundamentally changed. And, almost in parallel, as a reckoning of systemic racism came to a head, we were forced to reassess and reflect on our values and what it means to be human.

From people and businesses to governments, everyone needed to find new ways to navigate this new world—and this trends report was no different. How do you uncover and discuss the implications of global marketing trends at a time when the world has seemingly turned on its axis and still continues to change in unpredictable ways?

To seek an answer to this question, we set out on an all-encompassing journey to better understand how people and brands responded to the pandemic—and, most importantly, why some brands were able to flourish even during these

THE 2021 GLOBAL MARKETING TRENDS STUDY

As our world went through rapid changes, we recognized a need to dig deeper into the evolving milieu to better understand how consumers and executives are responding to their new environments. With this in mind, we conducted two surveys to inform each of the 2021 Global Marketing Trends chapters.

The Global Marketing Trends Consumer Pulse Survey polled 2,447 global consumers, ages 18 and above, in April 2020. This survey was launched in the United States, the United Kingdom, Mexico, China, South Africa, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Global Marketing Trends C-suite Survey polled 405 US C-suite executives from global companies in May 2020. This survey asked CMOs, CFOs, COOs, and CHROs their thoughts on a variety of topics related to their response to COVID-19.

turbulent times. In our second annual report, we combine subject matter expertise, voices from the field, and two overarching surveys—one consumer-based and the other targeted toward executives—to separate the signals from the noise of change (see the sidebar, “The 2021 Global Marketing Trends study” to learn more).

Even among executives, our research found they’re feeling the pressure of an uncertain future. For instance, 18 months ago, we polled executives on their ability to influence their peers and make a strategic impact.⁴ When we asked 405 executives the same questions in May of 2020, we saw C-suite confidence has plummeted across the board (figure 1).

As often is the case when we are unsure of how to respond, our most basic instincts kick in and we prioritize survival over *human connection* and *growth*. When we asked these executives what outcomes they hoped to achieve in responding to

the pandemic, the majority prioritized improving efficiency and productivity over more human-centric initiatives such as strengthening customer engagement, retaining talent, and increasing the company’s impact on society. And in these moments of high stress and low certainty, almost no one was thinking about growing revenues or disrupting their industry.

Answering the call for help

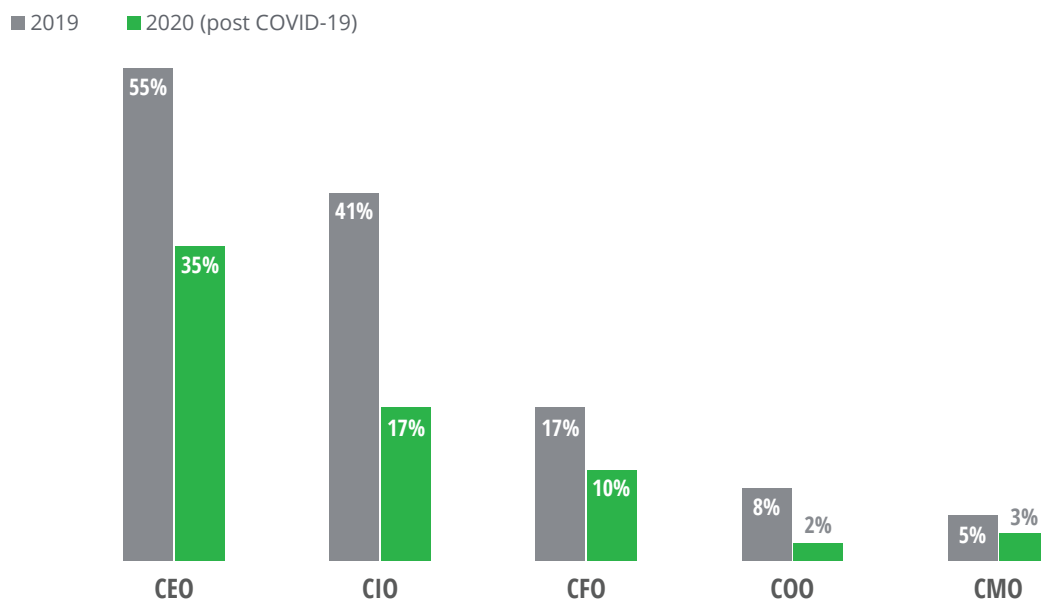
Of course, this isn’t unprecedented or unexpected behavior, but when we polled consumers, they showed us that as times get tougher, they expect more from the brands they frequent. Consider the following findings from our consumer survey:

- Almost four in five people could cite a time a brand responded positively to the pandemic and one in five strongly agreed it led to increased brand loyalty on their part.

FIGURE 1

C-suite executives have all seen a significant drop in confidence

Percentage of confident executives



Source: Deloitte Global Marketing Trends C-suite Survey.

- Conversely, more than 25% of those who noticed brands acting in their own self-interest walked away from those brands.
- More than 70% agreed they valued digital solutions that deepened their connection with other people, and 63% believe they will rely on digital technologies more than they did prior to the pandemic even well after it subsides.
- Fifty-eight percent of respondents could recall at least one brand that quickly pivoted to better respond to their needs, and 82% said this led to them doing more business with the brand.

When we analyze these findings in tandem, we see a very clear message: In these wild times of uncertainty, people are looking to brands for *help*—and rewarding those that can meet their most pressing needs in the moment.

In this spirit, we developed seven trends to help executives break through this wall of uncertainty and take action. These trends can enable leaders to *respond* to customer needs as they unfold, *pivot* business models to better align to evolving needs, and *foster* the human connection we all crave.

Breaking through with seven trends

Each of our 2021 global marketing trends shares the common theme of breaking out of our often-defensive mindsets to more holistically—and authentically—meet human needs.

In our opening trend chapter on **Purpose**, we establish the foundation required to flourish in even the most turbulent of times. To do this,

organizations should be deeply attuned to why they exist and who they are built to serve.

Our second chapter, **Agility**, explores how organizations can best structure themselves to not only live out this purpose, but also to do so as stakeholder needs unfold.

The **Human Experience** chapter explores how organizations can break out of their efficiency-first mindsets to elevate the experiences of their customers, workforces, and business partners. In our fourth chapter, **Trust**, we provide a means to holding brands accountable and ensuring that the messages they convey are congruent with the experiences they deliver.

Our fifth trend chapter, **Participation**, makes use of an in-depth consumer study to highlight how some of the leading companies in the world are harnessing customer passion to bolster their engagement strategies through customer-led innovation and advocacy.

Our **Fusion** trend sheds light on how some of the most creative companies in the world were able to overcome their defensive mindsets to create entirely new solutions through the fusing of new partnerships, customer ideas, and digital ecosystems.

The final chapter, **Talent**, provides a line of sight into how marketing can elevate its talent model into a competitive differentiator—even in the toughest of times.

These trends do not purport to predict what the future holds, but they may offer something more pressing: a path forward to help your customers, workforces, and society when, collectively, we need it the most.

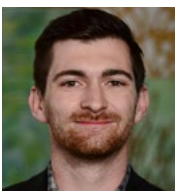
Endnotes

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3. Dimple Agarwal et al., *The rise of the social enterprise: 2018 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends*, Deloitte Insights, 2018.
4. Diana O'Brien, Jennifer Veenstra, and Timothy Murphy, *The makings of a more confident CMO: Three ways to increase C-suite impact*, Deloitte Insights, September 18, 2020.

About the authors



Jennifer Veenstra is the managing director of Deloitte's Global CMO Program. She focuses on CMO leadership, especially around the client experience, driving strategy, and digital transformation. She works across multiple industry areas to help CMOs in delivering enterprise growth and connecting with customers around purpose. She has led the transformation of the Deloitte Client Experience.



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