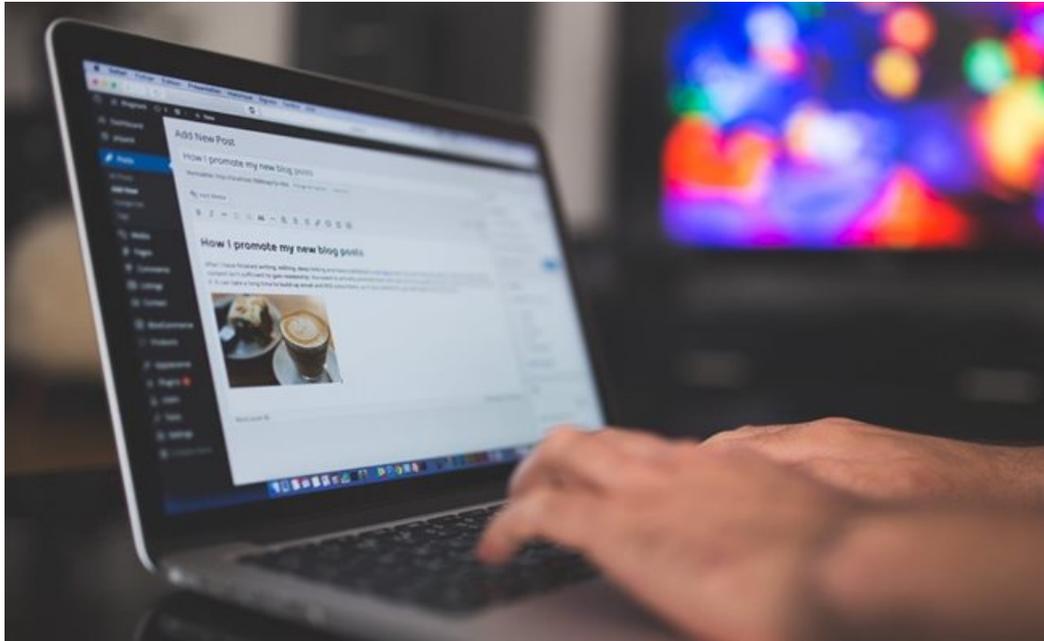


# What you should know about marketing in 2021

By [Rirhandzu Shingwenyana](#)

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There is no need to say that things have dramatically changed over the past nine or so months. The colossal disruption brought by the Covid-19 pandemic is evident in almost all aspects of our personal and business environments.



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As the year begins, companies and brands usually make changes and shifts in their habits. What worked in the past might not work this time. Digital transformation has arrived, and companies and brands must adapt, or they will suffer the consequence.

So, what must companies and brands do differently during these unprecedented and uncertain times?

## **Social media and digital marketing**

Social media and digital marketing have become an anchor of modern marketing and advertising. Traditional marketing and advertising have not completely died out, however, elements such as TV and radio are still holding on despite all the challenges.

Unfortunately, we can't say the same for newspapers as digital newspapers are reviving the channel. In 2021, we will see more brands and companies spending more on social media and digital marketing. There will be a split percentage between TV, radio, social media, and digital in the budget allocation.

According to a survey by Hootsuite, more than half of all businesses (60%) are planning to increase their Instagram budget, and almost half are planning to do the same for Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. Notably, for all the hype surrounding TikTok, there is no evidence of increased importance in this investment stack.

There is still scepticism surrounding organisations who do not know how to quantify their social media and digital marketing return on advertising spend (ROAS), especially those who are not in the marketing and advertising space. Therefore, the reporting part of social media and digital marketing will have to be tightened to convince the CEOs that these channels are effective.

### **Online shopping**

According to Hootsuite Digital 2020 data, 70% of internet users aged between 55-64 say they've bought something online in the past month, between 23-37% are planning to continue doing so more frequently even when the pandemic is over. As the pandemic continues, more people will turn to online shopping. This is a convenient and safer way in avoiding the coronavirus. This creates an opportunity for companies and brands to have an e-commerce shop where their customers would conveniently purchase goods.

### **Brand activism becomes mainstream**

In the past year we have seen a rise in brands become vocal about issues such as #BlackLivesMatter and standing up against injustices and inequalities. In 2021, this is the year of reckoning. If your brand keeps quiet because you are afraid that you will upset people, you got something coming. Brands need to be vocal and become active members of the community. The time of standing on the side watching as the world moves and communities advocate for the inequities and injustice are over. Some people may say, marketers are not supposed to get involved in any politics, but unfortunately politics affects us all, and you will have to show your customers what you stand for.

Modern brand building is changing as organisations adapt to the socially conscious mindsets and expectations of younger, more diverse generational cohorts like Gen Z. Social media is the best place to become involved in help and some of the issues affecting your customers.

Becoming vocal as a brand will certainly be on the right side of history in the years to come — but becoming one isn't something you can fake or simply mimic on social media. This is where a lot of brands stumbled in 2020. The desire and understanding of how to respond to public pressure positively contributes to these conversations ended up manifesting in knee-jerk reactions, many of which were quickly called out as hypocritical. Brands will have to be careful in this regard.

### **Gaming will become mainstream**

The e-sport industry is fast growing and more brands are looking for an opportunity in that space to maximise their reach and engagement. Although, in South Africa, the gaming space is still very small and this discourages local brands from trying to enter. This year, since more people are at home — working from home. That means more people are spending time indoors, so there is an opportunity to take advantage of establishing your brand in the space through online engagement with the gaming community. The rise of e-sport platforms such as Twitch has created more opportunities for gamers to create a rite of passage for the brand to reach and engage with this niche community.

### **Content marketing to continue as king**

The past few years have seen a rise in content marketing from brands and companies. This year will be not an exception as more brands and companies will want to do more in the content curation and development to accelerate their marketing

effort and communication through well-packaged content.

With the latest meteorite growth of the video share platform, TikTok will have an advantage in video content curation. More brands will want to get into this platform. Thus, content marketing will reach more customers through video-based platform. However, brands should be cautious of falling into the trap of mimicking other brands and end losing their brand essence. It will be important when curating content marketing to always maintain your brand ethos and essence.

## ABOUT RIRHANDZU SHINGWENYANA

Rirhandzu Shingwenyana is a marketing, advertising and communications professional with experience in account management, social media and digital marketing campaign management.

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