

Report

2022

The State of Social



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Introduction: Trends to Watch in 2022



Executive Summary: Consumers Call on Brands to Level Up

Findings:

The New Year promises to keep brands on their toes from the look of things. Some trends are continuing their approach to normalization, and the COVID appears to have more tricks up its sleeve. Brands will want to keep their consumer and market intelligence up-to-date to navigate shifts and disruptions as they arise.

In that vein, we'll explore some trends and other indicators to watch and fold into your strategic social media planning in 2022, including:

- Inclusivity & societal awareness to stay top-of-mind
- Micro-influencers creating opportunities for category challengers & market disruptions
- Consumers consistently seeking out interacting with visual content

And then, of course, we'll also be sharing the ways in which brands have been—and will continue to—stay ahead of consumer and market shifts with continuous intelligence. And why accurate, real-time business intelligence is going to make or break brands in 2022.

Keeping tabs on emerging trends is going to be vital to success next year, which may not feel like a new revelation, but it is as it comes with a twist. With more people interacting online due to COVID, consumers have become very aware of their power and companies are paying attention. There is much less room for error online these days and brands need to level up on their listening and action, as consumers are watching and calling you out.

It's also an increasingly visual world, so having a consistent and recognizable approach across the social web will be crucial—as are technologically advanced options for product selections. Best practices around AR adoption, visual branding, understanding audience shifts and more are shared in this report to help brands sort out how all of it should look!

Here are a few relevant stats we uncovered—bits of intel that you'll want to keep top-of-mind as you solidify plans for the new year:

- Inclusivity is a growing trend as Millennials, and Gen Z are much more diverse than their predecessors. Of the 87 million millennials in the US, only **56% are white**, in contrast to 72% of the 76 million baby boomers.
- Micro-influencers typically have between 5,000-25,000 followers. At 6% engagement, they have the **highest average engagement rate** on Instagram compared to the other tiers of influencers.
- The global business intelligence market reached \$20.5 billion in 2020 and is projected to top **\$40.5 billion by 2026**. That would return a CAGR of 12%.
- **90% of users** have connected with a brand through a social media platform.

Brands Will Adapt to Increasingly Visual Approach in 2022

TikTok, Facebook, Instagram & YouTube Revolutionize Consumer Experience

- Over 500 million people watch videos on Facebook's platform every day.
- 49% of consumers are willing to spend more on a product if they can try it out using augmented reality (AR).
- TikTok passed 1 Billion users in 2021

Brands are no longer competing on the merit of their products alone. Thanks to social media, the customer experience is public, and consumers are choosing brands as an extension of their personalities.

Those brands that want to stay on the radar in 2022 will need to adapt an increasingly visual approach going forward. Technology is steamrolling in the direction of visual content, and new technological applications are right around the corner. And that will make your visual brand identity more important than ever.

More specifically:

- TikTok, Facebook, Instagram & YouTube are revolutionizing the consumer experience
- Brands must prepare for AR & other metaverse technologies
- Mastering the visual brand identity overall is crucial

The consumer experience has undergone a drastic transformation over the past few years. With our eye on the future, we'll look at a few brands that have leveraged their visual brand identity for social media success.

Each of the social media platforms listed above are game changers in their own right. And they are all constantly evolving. Facebook took the reins away from Myspace and now reigns supreme in the world of social media. Instagram blossomed as a photo-sharing platform and captured the heart of a younger audience.

TikTok exploded in popularity over the past couple of years with its easily digestible short-form video format. And YouTube has been there all along as a mainstay for all things video. Most brands have a presence on at least one platform, but not all brands do it well.

Others have figured out how to parlay their visual brand identity into social media and turbocharge their customer experience. And here are a few doing just that . . .

Fig 1: Tentsile interacting with consumers on Instagram.

Tentsile on Instagram

Tentsile sells camping hammocks and tree tents meant to take your camping experience to the next level. They certainly have an appeal for a niche audience and an **eye for Instagram**. As such, their feed makes you feel like you are on an adventure, which is what your visual brand identity should do. They generate a lot of user generated content (UGC) too, which they use on their page to truly make their customers part of the conversation.



Manscaped on TikTok

Manscaped has the men's 'below the waist' grooming market on lock. They have embraced a tongue-in-cheek marketing style and created a visual brand identity that's perfect for TikTok. It's a level 10 on the cheese factor, but it works for them, and their customers know what to expect. They rack up the likes on TikTok, generating eye-rolls, laughs, and UGC in the process.

LEGO on YouTube

LEGO is the **largest toy company in the world**. They've been capturing the imaginations of kids of all ages for generations. Their **YouTube channel** boasts over 13 million subscribers and has become a mainstay of their visual brand identity.

Not only do they use their channel to host tons of branded content, but they also regularly run campaigns to compel fans to create and share UGC. LEGO also encourages its audience to create their own YouTube channels to keep the brand engagement flowing.

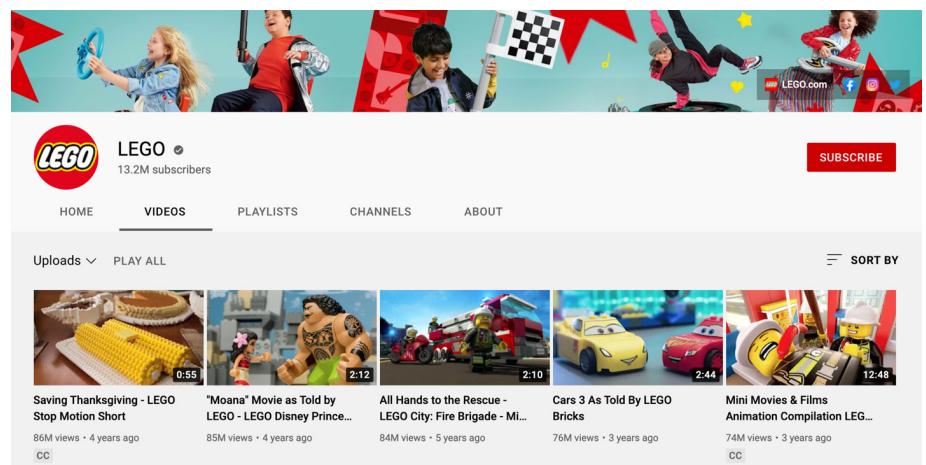
Fig 2: Manscaped continuing to win the brand marketing game on TikTok.



Preparing for AR & Other Metaverse Technologies



Fig 3: Lego offering consumers exactly what they want on YouTube.



Once seen as niche products in gaming and entertainment, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are seeing mass adoption. Aside from gaming and social media, they are infiltrating education, healthcare, and marketing as well.

AR hit mainstream as virtual additions to photos and videos on Snapchat and Instagram, and with **Pokémon Go** back in 2016. And that was just a taste of where technology was headed. Many brands have already incorporated some level of AR-functionality into their apps so consumers can try their products virtually.

For instance, IKEA is offering beta access to their **IKEA Studio app** that uses the LiDAR capabilities in iOS to capture 3D measurements of a room so you can design your look from the ground up.

VR headset sales are on fire and set to finish 2021 **up nearly 29%**. Prices have fallen drastically from just a few short years ago, making VR more accessible than ever. For example, Facebook's **Oculus Quest 2** now retails for only \$299.

And speaking of Facebook, they've announced plans for **heavy investment into AR/VR** in addition to changing the company's name to Meta—a shortened form of metaverse. The term describes a future form of the internet formed by 3D virtual spaces linked together to create a cohesive virtual universe. Facebook is going all-in on it with visual content—and investment of this scale will lead to innovation around the corner.

Mastering the Visual Brand Identity

Brands will want to keep a keen eye on things as they play out. AR applications will continue to roll out, luring consumers to brands with memorable experiences. VR will offer immersive brand opportunities from traditional ads in-game lobbies to ordering Doordash through your headset. And virtual hangouts in social media applications will provide unique opportunities for brands with the foresight to develop their next-gen visual brand identity.

A visual brand identity is made up of your logo, typography, color palette, and imagery. You probably have the first three squared away, but it's the imagery part that brands will need to focus on as the 'metaverse' evolves.

The brands we listed above have honed their visual brand identity in a way that works well for the specific platforms they use. However, social media platforms do not stay static. As such, it's imperative going forward to understand visual trends to keep your brand identity relevant to your consumer base.

Market intelligence is your key to staying informed on visual trends as technology shifts and markets react. **Social listening** will tell the story about how your audience perceives these changes and what kind of experiences they enjoy. Monitoring front runners in AR/VR will also help inform how to shape and insert your visual brand identity into relevant platforms.

Change is afoot in the world of social media, and consumers are excited about the future. There have been over seven million mentions of the metaverse in the past month alone, and sentiment is riding high at 74%.

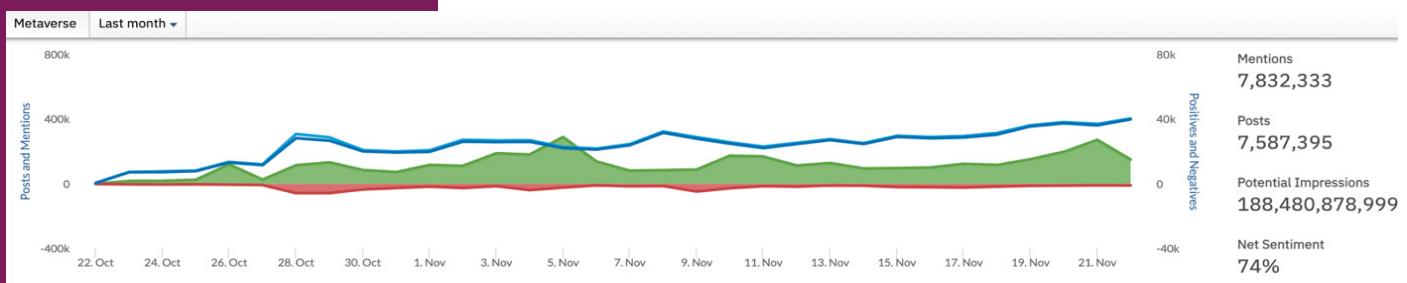


Fig 4: Social media users discussing the Metaverse.
10/22/21-11/22/21

Brands that can adapt and present stunning visual content will prevail over their counterparts content with business as usual. Social listening will provide the **consumer and market intelligence** to develop a visual brand identity that works well in our evolving social environment.

Inclusivity & Societal Awareness to Stay Top-of-Mind

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With our increasing interconnectedness, the world is becoming a smaller place. The days of reading the local paper over breakfast are long gone, never to return. The news cycle is a torrent of global news dissected, discussed, and perpetuated through social media. We're more aware than ever of society's ills worldwide and exposed to new cultures, ideas, and ways of thinking.

As of July 2021, social media platforms have surpassed **4.48 billion users**, contributing to societal awareness and calls for inclusivity. The US is undoubtedly a melting pot and becoming increasingly diverse, as we mentioned above—and brands need to focus their consumer and market intelligence in the direction of inclusivity and societal awareness if they want to stay relevant.

Case in point, after the onset of the pandemic, Gen Z and Millennials have **contributed the most to the ecommerce boom**. Together 33% of them have increased their spending online compared to just 23% of Gen X and Baby Boomers.

The inclusivity conversation is enjoying a lot of traction online, so there's no excuse for brands to not monitor the conversation for insight. Here's a snapshot of the summary metrics over the past month showing potential impressions at a staggering 31 billion and net sentiment at a mostly positive 53%.

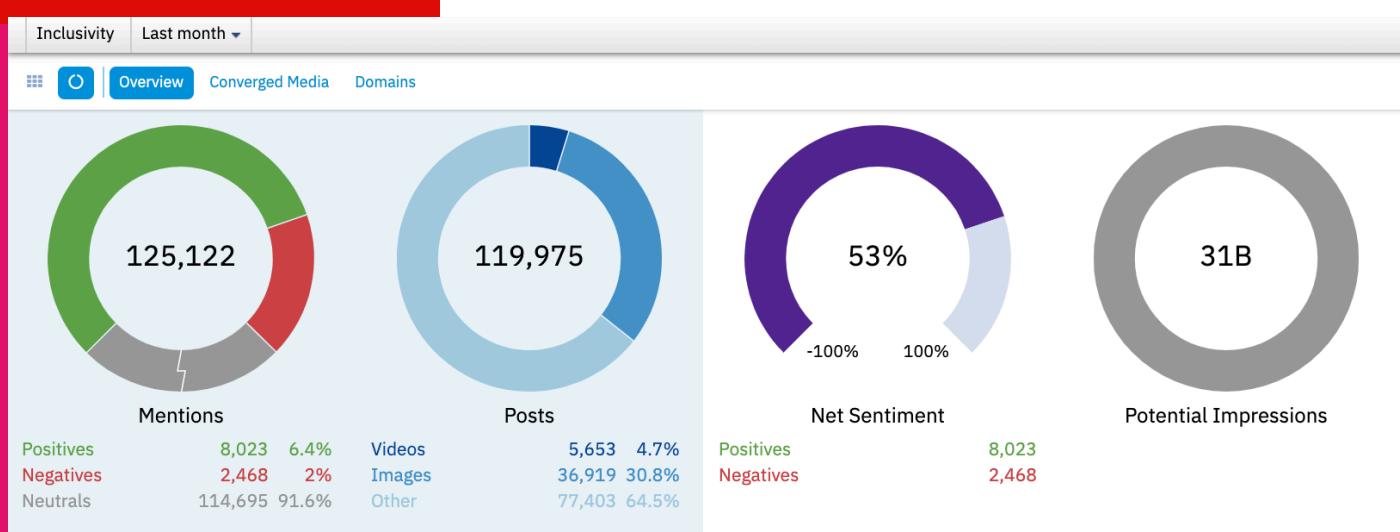


Fig 5: Summary metrics of social media users discussing inclusivity.
10/27/21-11/27/21

Adding to this, consumers have learned to watch brands like a hawk. They are actively looking for brands that mirror their beliefs and dropping others that fall afoul of emerging trends like this. And that's a trend in itself.

Micro-influencers Will Create Opportunities for Category Challengers & Market Disruptions

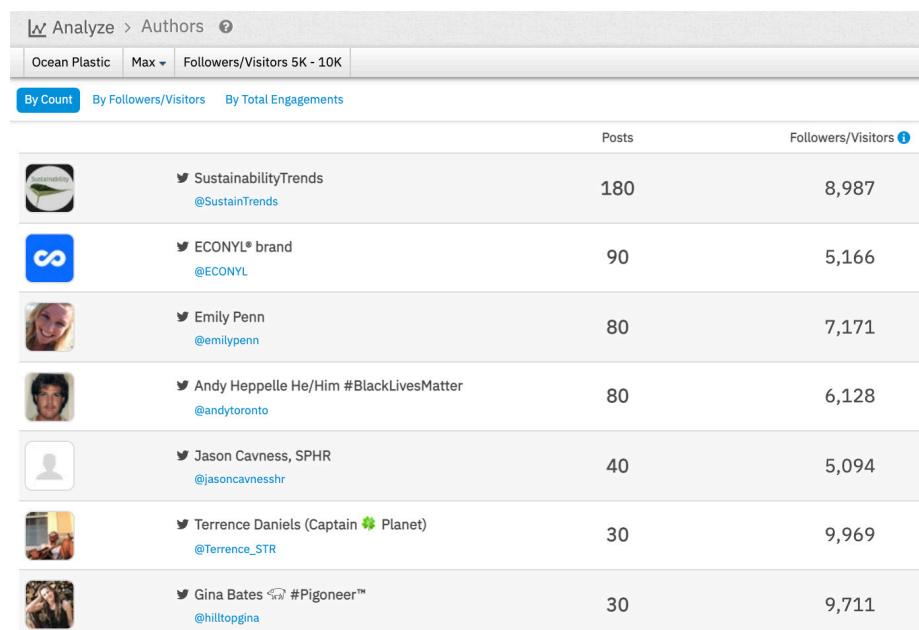
Fig 6: Top social media influencers with 5k-10k followers in the ocean plastics narrative.

Instagram is the platform most marketers turn to when they shop for influencers. The thing is—consumers seem to trust smaller influencers more than they do celebrity influencers. As such, micro-influencers with 5k-25k followers have the highest average engagement on the platform, making them a smart choice for many brands.

They offer more bang for your buck, which means you can employ more of them and realistically achieve better reach and engagement than you would by hiring one high-level influencer. Not only that, but they also tend to be more in touch with consumers in niche areas. And that's what makes micro-influencers a perfect choice for brands looking to **capitalize on white space opportunities**.

And the big thing to think about for next year is that COVID isn't finished causing disruptions worldwide. Supply chains are groaning under the compounded repercussions of lockdowns, e-commerce dependence, and the global shipping fiasco. And now that a new variant has been discovered, we can expect more market shifts as nations struggle to keep their economies running.

There will be many more first-mover opportunities this coming year, as there has been throughout the pandemic. Brands tuned in to **emerging trends** surrounding their segment can apply their 'audience as a theme' within a trend analysis and find the micro-influencers discussing the topic with your audience. That's what we did here to uncover the smaller influencers at work in the ocean plastic narrative over the past two years:



Brands Will Stay Ahead of Consumer & Market Shifts with Continuous Intelligence



As you prepare for your next campaign, don't overlook the collective power of micro-influencers to help you rock the boat and get the word out. Also, make sure to get comfortable finding them within a **trend analysis**. White space doesn't stay there for very long, and it's all about who gets engagement first.

As problems arise this coming year, markets will adjust to provide solutions. Brands that focus on monitoring **consumer and market intelligence** will be the first on the scene while others figure out what's going on.

We're still in the wild west days of consumer and market intelligence, but the gap is quickly closing as more brands onboard **social listening** and data analytics. Understanding the voice of the customer has been a defining attribute in brands that have adapted well throughout the pandemic. However, other brands have taken note and are in the process of getting with the program themselves. That's why the global business intelligence market is set to grow at a CAGR of 12% through 2026.

Uncovering and monitoring actionable consumer and market intelligence will make all the difference between brands that survive and those that thrive. And keeping your brand in tune with emerging trends will ensure your brand is focused on what's top-of-mind with your audience.

There's no such thing as too much **market intelligence**, so monitoring critical metrics and current events in real-time is vital. And you should monitor engagement around traditional news in addition to social media for a holistic viewpoint of conversations impacting your brand, competitors, and category. Adding your internal data into your analytics solution is the icing on the cake for brands taking their situational awareness to the next level.

Brands interested in continuous market intelligence will need to overcome their data silos and get their enterprise on the same page. And that's why **NetBase Quid's BI Connector** is a brilliant solution for brands keen on enterprise-level continuous intelligence.

The BI Connector is an end-to-end solution for data connectivity, storage, and distribution. It combines consumer analytics data, market data, share of voice, global news and media outlets, forums, blogs, and social media channels, surveys, review sites, earnings call uploads, patent and company data—along with any CRM or proprietary data you want to add to the mix. Take all of that intel and turn it into immediately actionable insight in the business intelligence solution of choice—or use custom-built NetBase Quid dashboards to display it. It's a game-changer for sure.



Fig 7: NetBase Quid's Business Intelligence Connector in action.

Conclusion: Consumer & Market Intelligence will Make or Break Brands

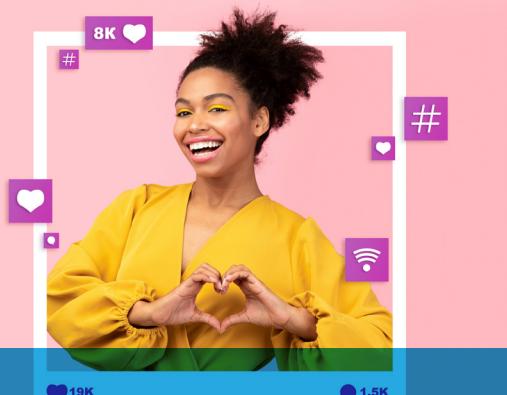
Speed to insight makes all the difference in deploying dynamic solutions ahead of the competition. The sooner you get your brand up to speed with continuous consumer and market intelligence, the better.

It's a no-brainer that well-informed brands are in the best position to create effective strategies in light of market shifts and emerging trends. Companies coasting on what worked yesterday will continue to decline in relevance.

As new circumstances arise, consumers are watching how brands react. And brands can't sweep issues under the rug and feign ignorance. A tone-deaf social media post or a viral video involving your brand can quickly throw your brand into a tailspin. And these days, it's not an if, but a when scenario. Continuous consumer and market intelligence is your best bet to avoid a crisis—and put out the flames when it can't be avoided.

Even damage control can help build trust with your audience, but it's essential to get it right. That's because **65% of consumers** feel that how a brand handles itself during a crisis significantly impacts their trust and confidence. Whatever comes your way on the social web and beyond in 2022, consumer and market intelligence is your best bet to make the most of every situation.

Do you feel confident in your brand's ability to capture and share the many sources of intelligence available to you? Spending the remainder of 2021 getting your consumer and market intelligence house in order would be wise. Happy planning!





We Make the World Make Sense™

About Us

NetBase Quid delivers AI-powered consumer and market intelligence to enable business reinvention in a noisy and unpredictable world.

Our platform uses advanced artificial intelligence to process billions of indexed resources across all forms of structured and unstructured data, empowering brand, agency, and consulting services customers to make smart, data-driven decisions accurately, quickly, and efficiently.

We are the trusted partner of Ogilvy, T-Mobile, United Airlines, YUM! Brands, Walmart, Hyundai, Wunderman Thompson, Microsoft, BCG, and The New York Times.

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