



BRAND AND MARKETING COMMUNICATION TRENDS IN SECOND HALF OF 2021:

# Looking towards the 'New Normal'

As we continue to make progress and return to a more familiar business environment, we know for sure, that it will never be like it was before the pandemic. We've all heard and seen how years of communication and collaboration progress have been achieved in months, so it is not surprising that brand communication is evolving too. How should we navigate through the second half of 2021 and beyond (pending any and all virus curveballs)? Here are five things to consider.

BY: ALEX HADDON



## 1. THE CONTINUED RISE OF AUTHENTICITY

So many challenges have had to be faced in the last 15 months, with a great deal of uncertainty and constant movement of goal posts. Otherwise reliable services have come up short, yet there has been significant patience because brands were quick to say that it was not possible to deliver the service as usual. This has created a new and lasting set of expectations for communication to be honest and clear. There's no place to hide and people have come to expect and demand the truth from brands. Moving forward, brands need to figure out how to keep this up without the backdrop of a pandemic. There is also a strong appetite for lagom – that little perfect Swedish word; not too little and definitely not too much. This aligns very well with being sustainable and taking a more measured approach to consuming. Proving your brand's worth will reassure your audience that you are a sound investment.



## 2. ADAPTING TO HYBRID EVENTS

Planning for events has been a real headache for most businesses during the pandemic. As we move forward, there is real growth in hybrid events that offer in person and virtual content simultaneously. To maximise this dual opportunity, the communication challenge is to market effectively with both versions appearing equally appealing, just different. The risks are that it is unclear what exactly is being offered and not showcasing the strengths of your event, you end up somewhere in between the two.



## 3. FOCUS ON PEOPLE

Visuals promoting togetherness will be popular as crowds won't be seen as something scary, negative or irresponsible. There will be increased messaging encouraging us to be the best version of ourselves and to make the most out of all opportunities. So, get personal with your look and feel – up close or using images of people enjoying being together. It's not a bad idea to tap into that theme for your brand – after all, we are herd animals and coming together again will be one of the most enjoyable aspects we look forward to.



## 4. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Every trends review you read will include artificial intelligence (AI) as it is such a buzzword for business and brands. We already see AI widely used for personalisation and product recommendations, dynamic content creation and basic communication such as chatbots. As the technology becomes more sophisticated, it will enable brands to get deeper into machine learning and also become conversational – a big step forward in communicating your brand USPs. We should think creatively to work out how to make these opportunities be more 'on brand' and less generic, perhaps focusing on specific functions that really fit your brand rather than a scatter gun approach because the technology is available.



## 5. AND FINALLY, THE RETURN OF CHEEKY HUMOUR

The UK market especially, really responds to humour in branding and marketing. As we start to live with more certainty, we will be open to, and respond well to, a more fun and perhaps cheeky tone of voice. This has long been used as a very effective brand differentiator for many brands. It grabs attention, creates a sense of surprise and displays a real confidence that is very attractive. You can choose as and when to use humour, it does not have to be your primary tone of voice.

Success, as we move forward, will depend on not just your communication methods but also the timing and tone. The brands who read the room quickly and can act nimbly, will have a distinct advantage by creating opportunity to gain market share.

It's also important that you get your strategy right and choose the right channels to focus on – better to do fewer brand and marketing activities and do them really well. Let key words such as quality, personalisation, trust and transparency be your guiding light.

### ABOUT ALEX HADDON

Alex Haddon is the Managing & Creative Director of SCC member firm IC Design, a company she founded in 1998. Alex is passionate about integrating great design into all levels of communication and the positive impact this has on a commercial level. Alex is a member of the Board of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce for the UK and chairs its Marketing Committee. She has also served as a business mentor in the SCC mentorship programme. Learn more at [www.icdesign.co.uk](http://www.icdesign.co.uk)