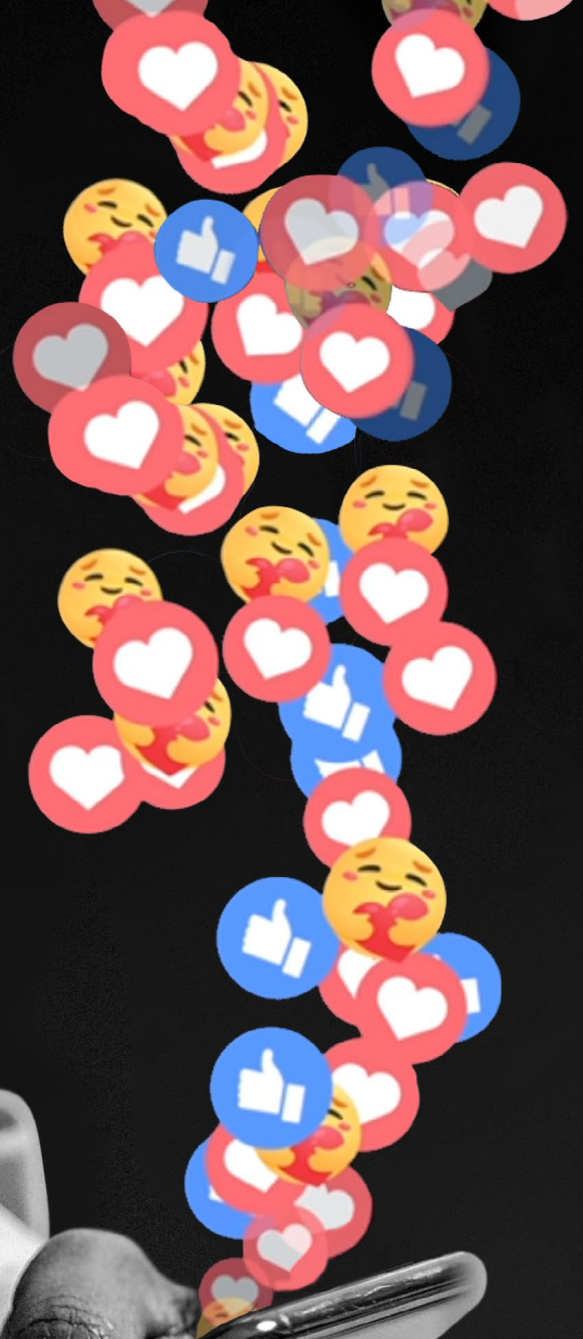


LET'S ROKK: 2023 DIGITAL TRENDS REPORT



As we enter Q4 and immerse in 2023 strategic communications planning, our ROKK stars put their heads together to trendspot what in the digital and social media world will evolve next year.

Despite several nail-biter midterm races and new digital innovations from back home and abroad in the headlines, it's reassuring to see that some things never change. For instance, the "copycat" effect is ever-present, with TikTok releasing location-based features and feeds like Snapchat and Instagram launching features capturing the authenticity of BeReal. And even some new disruptors may sound familiar: Bigo Live seems suspiciously similar to Twitch as well as the expansion of Podcasts and corresponding social listening, Amazon and Apple ads to new iPhones and iPads is great for advertisers, but hardly groundbreaking.

The bottom line is that this year, the more things change the more things stay the same. And that may be just what we need as our strategies and budgets return to some semblance of normalcy.

Use the 10 trends in this report as thought-starters for evolving your public affairs and communications strategies to achieve maximum efficiency and reach as we approach next year.

Digitally,

Rachel Winer

Senior Vice President, Digital



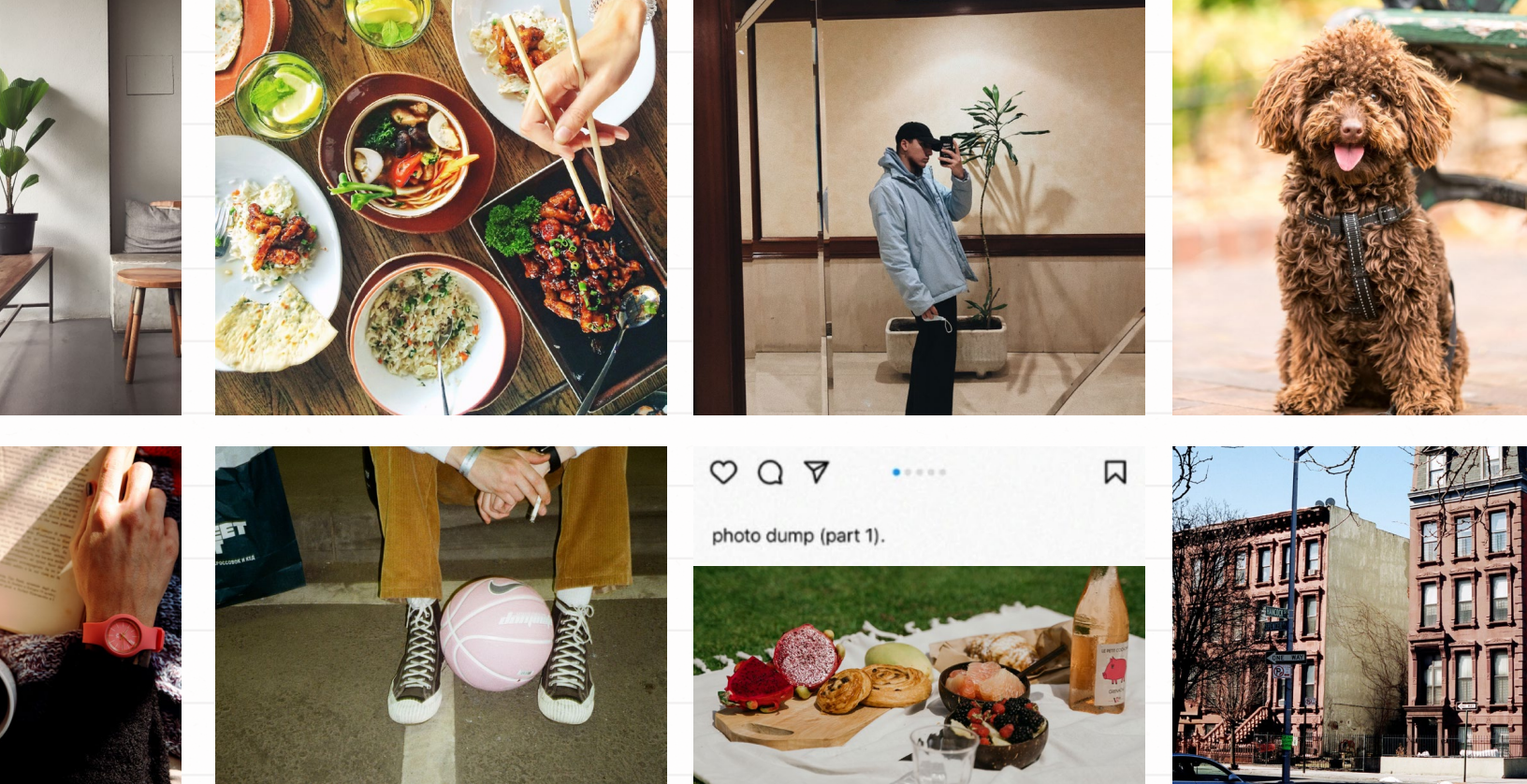
1. Audiences spending more time on apps

More about the algorithmic content and less about followers. The platform cheats and funding to keep their users within “walled gardens” will flourish. Investors will continue to put their money in the creator economy to help achieve endless-scroll status. Big Tech leaders such as Mark Zuckerberg are banking on increased audience stress and new products like the Metaverse to increase time spent online overall and on a given platform.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

Focus on authentic, engaging content on channels where your target audience is most likely to engage. Use the power of research and data to drive genuine and authentic experiences, along with a healthy budget for more traditional paid advertising. This approach ensures that your message will break through the clutter.

-Trend inspiration from Benjamin Khoshbin, Senior Account Executive



2. Casual visual and written content

We're seeing more and more less-formal "photo dumps" and less-formatted digital content to appeal to "common-folk" consumption.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

Casual, off-the-cuff content is challenging for large organizations with convoluted review processes to pull off. Consider asking for a dedicated reviewer and approver for your social media posts: someone who can review things quickly and work with your community manager and social team in real time to develop content when necessary. And don't forget the 80/20 rule - aim to have 80% of your handle's content be pre-planned, and 20% be more casual and real-time engagements.

-Trend inspiration from Bridget Sullivan, Account Executive



3. Growth of cost-efficient micro and nano-influencers

Non-celebrity content creators and talent with as few as 100 followers will develop and disseminate masses of casual—yet reliable and still-eye-opening—content for organizations. Everyone has a say and the capacity to influence change, buying power and decision-making.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

Partnerships with micro and nano influencers are a great way to deliver relevant and casual content from trusted sources. But remember: Their authenticity comes from being honest and engaging, so any content that they produce should be true to them and their brand.

-Trend inspiration from Brigitta Gegenheimer, Associate Art Director



4. Pandemic aftermath

Whether pivoting to reach in-person audiences or banking on e-commerce experiences to expand, COVID has affected how audiences consume and interact with content, well after the public health crisis.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

Pandemic fatigue is real and we are still in the midst of it. People are craving human connection, whether it's taking the time to message friends or influencers for recommendations on a big purchase or booking that family vacation that's been on hold for two years. This is the time to look at hyper-local digital experiences and engagement, fueled by data and some emotionally relevant copywriting.

-Trend inspiration from Corinne Gorda, Account Executive



5. Increased digital issues that policymakers will need to address

Lawmakers will grapple with election outcomes and updates as well as the continued spread of misinformation, which is only one of increasingly digital content and news consumption. Communicators will need to advocate for and against corresponding causes accordingly.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

We'll have new members of Congress who are green and open to learning about organizations' legislative priorities. Introduce yourself with sharp, easy-to-understand materials that are compelling and brief. At the same time, message your priorities to their base of supporters through targeted digital paid media strategies.

-Trend inspiration from Hamza Akhtar, Associate Account Executive



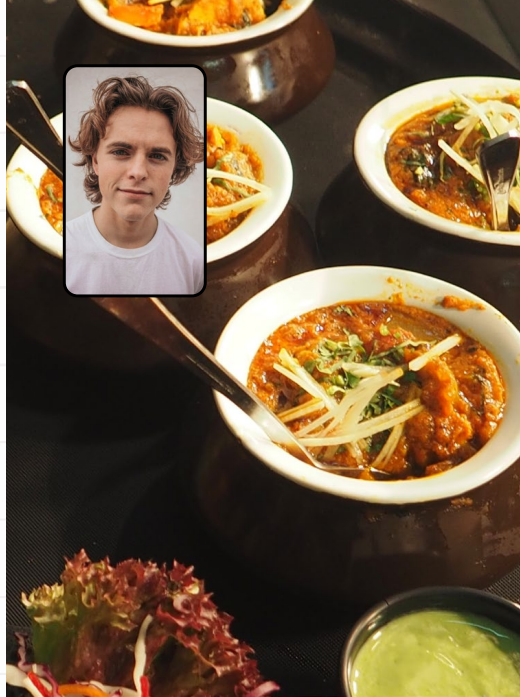
6. Videos that make “boring” topics more interesting

Whether you’re boosting or bashing your not-so-favorite healthcare company’s policies and procedures, the growth of digital video will continue to provide authentic opportunities for B2B and consumer organizations to share information in compelling ways.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

Reach your audience where they consume authentic, quality video content by testing digital advertising and sponsorship opportunities on YouTube, the world’s second-most visited site and the most visited by Gen Z. Do you usually target followers of the White House on Twitter? YouTube has a variety of high-quality news channels. Consider sponsoring a video series to reach that same audience in a very different way.

-Trend inspiration from Jeff Grappone, Senior Vice President



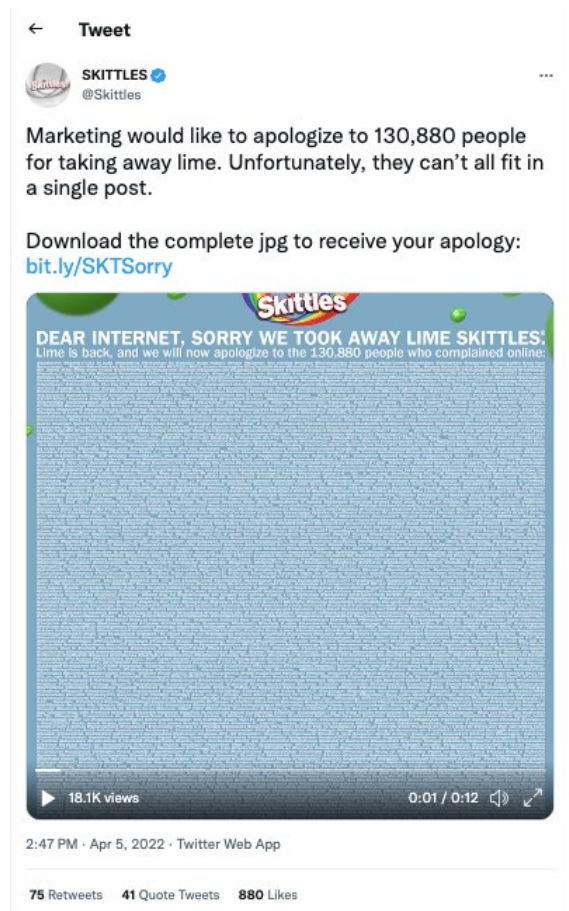
7. Back to authenticity to protect mental health

The original goal of social media, digital content will have fewer filters in 2023. Especially as Gen Zers and below remain dedicated to addressing and overcoming social media and IRL (in real life) stressors, they will pave the way for authentic content such as BeReal, conversation and consumption in the digital spaces they're dominating.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

If this seems like it directly contradicts what Meta is betting on- welcome to our world. While protecting consumers' mental health can look like spending less time on digital and social media, it can also mean more choiceful usage of social and digital platforms. Particularly for younger generations, choiceful usage is on the rise. If that includes your audience, invest your digital advertising dollars on strategies that focus on high-quality content to reach them in a positive and welcome manner.

-Trend inspiration from Rae DeBrabander, Senior Account Executive, Digital



8. Digital Trolls

Friends or foes, bots or benign and contrary to popular belief, politically driven trolls will surround digital engagement environments. This will allow for increased social activism as well as political and policy impact.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

Whether the old adage “all press is good press” applies when it comes to Internet trolls or not, plan for and monitor them and their voracious commenting to play algorithms to win. Power your social impact stances and content accordingly, or take it a step further and build a digital campaign that the trolls love to hate. Regardless, there are plenty of folks watching and listening... which is exactly what you want.

-Trend inspiration from Abbey Rogers, Senior Account Executive



9. Trash-talking on social media having real business implications

Calling businesses onto the social carpet has been a popular technique in recent years for legislators to garner press and engagement from the public on their key issues. But they aren't the only ones bringing attention to bad behavior via social media. Whether highlighting senior leaders whose private beliefs conflict with their company's stance, or calling out corporations for staying silent on issues that affect their employees, this kind of spotlight is increasingly putting businesses in a no-win situation.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

Don't get caught flat-footed when a social threat comes up. Begin social listening to track external risks ahead of time and engage with your senior leaders and communications team early on to have a plan for how, when, or if you will respond. Be ready to activate that cross-functional process at a moment's notice, to prevent the issue from spinning out of control.

*-Trend inspiration from Lindsay Singleton,
Managing Director and Chair of the Social Impact Practice*



10. Less intrusive creative, more compelling copy

As Google begins to disapprove ads and un-rank search results that drive to websites with pop-up ads and ads that take over large portions of the screen, creators and copywriters will need to pivot. This will require deep data and insights to inform digital content and imagery that will compel and capture audiences to engage.

STRATEGY-STARTER:

Audit your owned website properties and paid digital media advertising website destinations in advance. This will allow ample time for organizations to optimize and update corresponding communications strategies, campaigns and supporting budgets accordingly versus falling behind and getting hit with this change after the fact.

-Trend inspiration from Rachel Winer, Senior Vice President, Digital



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