



# **5** MARKETING TRENDS FOR THE SAVVY MARKETER IN 2022



Marketing has always been a challenging job—and the stress levels are only climbing higher year-over-year. In 2019, stress was on the upswing, and marketing leaders were predicting major changes in the next three years. And, hoo boy, did they not expect just how big those changes would be.

Since then, the pandemic has facilitated a huge spike in virtual events. Digital transformation jolted into warp speed. Companies expanded to reach new segments and geographies. And—unsurprisingly—internet sales jumped and jumped again.

And as the world continues to change around us at a rapid clip, so too does marketing.

So, what's a savvy marketer to do? What should you be keeping an eye on or testing out in 2022?

Read on for our take.





# 1. *The metaverse*

It might sound like something out of *Ready Player One*, but welcome to the future: *the metaverse is here*.

We've known about virtual worlds for a while now. Virtual reality was invented in the '50s, and more recently, extensive world-exploratory games have been popping up seemingly everywhere.

And brands are just starting to pay attention.

Virtual goods (like in-game purchases of weapons or character outfits) are already worth a whopping \$50 billion, [according to Wired](#). And experiments with other metaverse goods and services are already well underway, with the world's first ticketed virtual concert attracting 12 million people and [raking in \\$20 million](#) in earnings. Some of the opportunities for marketers here include plenty of user data (as we all know, data is king), digital products, a new crop of influencers, fashion shows, and product launches...the digital sky is kind of the limit.

As [Forbes](#) says, "Just like many in the early 2000s thought they would never need a social media presence (many leaving it in the hands of their summer interns to manage and set up the corporate social media accounts), brands in the 2020s will need to start setting up metaverse teams that will help them enter the era of Web 3.0."

## *The dark side of the metaverse*

Now, should marketers be paying attention to the metaverse? Damn right, we should.

We should *also be cautious* in weighing the good and bad that come with any new technology. In the case of the metaverse, there is some real potential for good in areas like accessibility. Someone with a chronic illness or disability that makes it difficult to leave the house can now attend a virtual concert or art show—and we're on board for that.

On the other hand, it's common for metaverse technology to use NFTs (nonfungible tokens). These tokens are verified by blockchain technology and take an enormous amount of energy. This means, despite being digital goods, they have a disproportionately large carbon footprint—among other concerns.

Marketers should educate themselves on the entire scope of opportunity and concern before dipping a toe in.



## 2. *Inclusive, purpose-driven marketing*

Gen Z. They're activists, environmentalists, and the most diverse generation America's ever seen. And no surprise here: 94% expect companies to [stand up for important social issues](#).

They're also [gaining buying power and driving business](#). And Millennials—who control about [30% of retail spending](#)—are strongly aligned with the values of their younger peers, according to [Pew Research](#).

So, what does this mean for marketers? Well, we hope you're already thinking about inclusion, but if you aren't—time to get on board. Because right now, [only 41% of people say they feel represented by the ads they see](#). And representation matters both ethically and for your bottom line.

So, what does inclusive marketing look like?



Photo Credit: Old Navy

### *Inclusive language and visuals*

Our words matter, and sometimes they exclude people without us even trying. Like the period-tracking app that allowed users to add a partner—but then [referred to all partners as if they were male](#), alienating their LGBTQ+ customers. Or, worse, when Nivea ran a “white is purity” campaign [without thinking through the racist connotations](#).

Brands that commit to gender-neutral and inclusive language and visuals that show a whole spectrum of life experiences—from queer families to indigenous influencers to curvy women rocking the latest fashion to wheelchair users living their best lives—will be the net winners in years to come.

### *Inclusivity behind the scenes*

Are your teams and contractors diverse? Are the people sitting around your marketing table representative of a large swath of the U.S.—or world—population? Who are you hiring? Who are you paying? Who are you listening to? If the people working on your projects aren't a diverse group, you're setting yourself up for failure.

Brands with annual revenue growth of 10% or more are more likely to establish metrics to measure their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, [according to Deloitte](#). We recommend you join them.

### *Long-term commitment and actions over words*

57% of consumers are more likely to stay loyal to brands that commit to addressing social inequalities, according to [research by Deloitte](#).

And while we are including this in an article about trends, let's be clear: **diversity isn't a trend**. It's not going away. LGBTQ+ people exist and will keep existing. [Disabled people exist and will keep existing](#). Racial diversity exists and will keep existing. Women are half the population. And advertising that's real will only continue to thrive.

*Not sure what terms you should use?* Consult the communities to whom those terms refer. If you have a question about how to be gender-inclusive, non-binary and trans people should weigh in. If you have a question about disability, look for a consultant who is disabled.



# 3. Zero-party data and contextual advertising

You're probably already familiar with [third-party and first-party data](#). The former is data collected about your users by third parties and then passed along to you for advertising purposes. The latter is when you collect data directly from your users.

Now, first-party data can encompass a lot of things. It can be the address and billing info your customers provide. It can be data about that customer's purchase habits or click-throughs. It can be information about how much time they spend on your blog and which pages they read.

And now, there's a new subset of that data—widely considered the most useful, most privacy-protecting, and most ethical data you can get. **Experts call it zero-party data.**

So, what is it? Essentially, it's first-party data (collected by you, directly from your users) **with direct, active consent**. If your customers share their email with you directly and on purpose, that's zero-party data. If they fill out a survey about their experiences, that's zero-party data. Personality tests, quizzes, preference forms, surveys, loyalty programs, subscription box preferences—there are lots of ways to collect this kind of data—and the key to getting it is to give something in return. Be that customization to their preferences or a chance to win a gift card.

As [Street Fight Magazine explains](#), “In addition to being more likely to enjoy the products they receive, **consumers are also more likely to engage with brands directly and leave reviews** that can be syndicated...creating deep data insights for brands that want both consumer and product feedback.”

## *Why does this matter as we go into 2022?*

First, because **privacy is still top-of-mind**. And, [according to research by McKinsey](#), customers trust companies less when they use cookies, collect passive data (for example, browsing history), or ask for info that isn't relevant to their product.

Second, because **zero-party data is a huge opportunity**. Instead of inferring a variety of things from browsing history, time on page, and other piecemeal passive data, you get the chance to *hear the customer say what they actually want*. Instead of chasing them around with diaper ads because they recently purchased a stroller, you can have clear data on whether they bought it for a baby shower or their own use. Instead of assuming a lot of time on veterinary articles means someone is an aspiring vet, you can find out that they're a concerned pet owner or a writer researching a novel.

In short: data is still king, queen, and emperor, as it ever was. But the ways we collect and use data are changing, and 2022 is a good time to pay attention.



### **ZERO-PARTY DATA**

Data that a customer shared actively and freely with a brand through quizzes, contests, personalized surveys, or opt-in forms



### **FIRST-PARTY DATA**

Data collected directly by a company about consumers when they interact with a brand



### **SECOND-PARTY DATA**

First-party data another company shares with yours and which you have contractual permission to use



### **THIRD-PARTY DATA**

Aggregated data from public/non-public sources that the customer may not have given consensually



Shop  with Google

### *Covid and the return to in-person*

Planning your first in-person experience post-Covid? Here are a couple of things to keep in mind. First, [the majority of Americans don't want to share space with unvaccinated people](#). This means large events may benefit from (or be subject to local rules about) requiring vaccination cards or Covid tests. Second, with Covid came a stark rise in disability and an even more pressing need for accessible venues. Make sure to hire a disability consultant as you plan your event.

## *4. Experiential marketing*

As in-person events and shopping start to ramp back up after a rough couple of years, so too is experiential marketing—both in person as we venture out of our homes and virtually, as some opt to stay behind the screen.

For marketers, this is good news. After all, **65% of brands say experiential marketing efforts are [directly correlated to their sales figures](#)**. And 54% of B2B marketers say it's effective in generating leads.

So, when you think about 2022—think experiential. Can your brand benefit from art installations, live events, pop-ups, VR, advocacy events, conventions, food experiences, contests, video, or interactive content? What makes the most sense for your particular brand?

From [Google's pop-up donut shops](#) (promoting its mini smart home speakers) to [virtual changing rooms](#) to [burning billboards](#), new and creative ideas are showing up all the time. And the benefits for customers are pretty clear: cool new experiences (which [studies show](#) make people happier than things), personalized shopping, and new and easier ways to get things done (see: virtual changing rooms that let you test out that color combo before you commit).

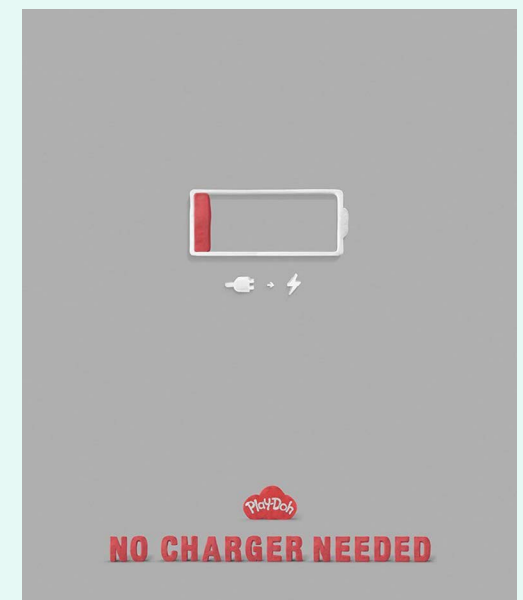
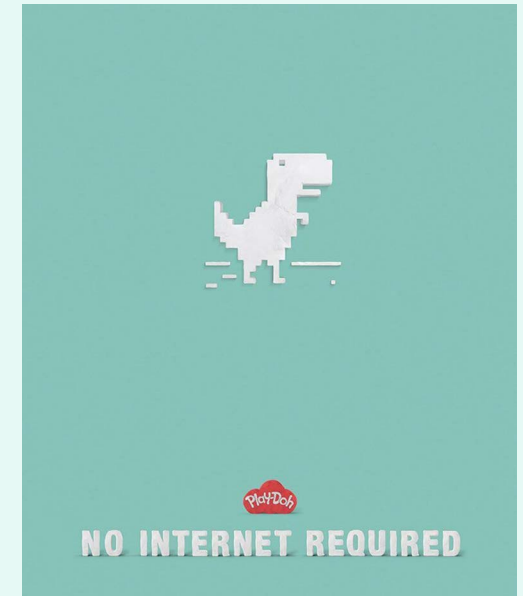
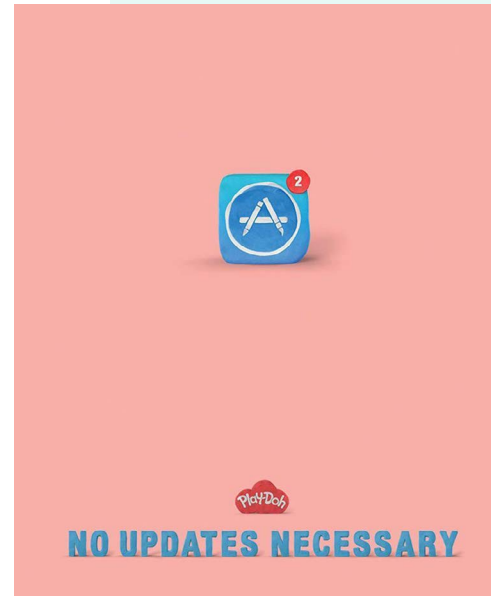
## 5. *Visual content*

If you know us, you know we love words. Give us a great headline, a snappy joke, a perfect turn of phrase...and we are putty in your hands. But that doesn't mean words are all you need—especially in an era of fragmented attention spans.

Because the truth is that people process visuals substantially faster, and they remember them longer. In fact, share some info with your customers via text, and they'll remember 10% of it three days later. Add a visual, and [the number jumps to 65%](#).

[Other research](#) tells us that articles with images every 75-100 words get double the social shares of articles without. And YouTube reaches more adults than cable TV during prime time.

With all that in mind, you won't be shocked that—from videos to VR and infographics to comic strips—experts expect visuals to be a priority for brands in 2022.







# *Ready to get on-trend?*

Helping clients plan their marketing strategies for the coming year is our wheelhouse. Take advantage of our combined decades of experience and passion for all things strategic to help your team plan and execute your 2022 campaigns. [Reach out anytime to find out how we can help.](#)





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