

The logo for 'down at the social' is located in the top right corner. It features the words 'down at' in a smaller, lowercase font above 'the social' in a larger, lowercase font. To the right of the text is a graphic consisting of three green hexagons of varying sizes, arranged in a descending staircase pattern.

down at  
the social

The main title '2022 TRENDS' is centered on the page. '2022' is written in a large, thin, green outline font. 'TRENDS' is written in a very large, bold, solid green font. The background is a photograph of a city street at dusk, featuring several multi-story brick buildings with many windows, some of which are lit up. In the foreground, there are trees and string lights, suggesting a festive or winter setting.

# 2022 TRENDS

**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT  
PR + SOCIAL FOR THE NEW YEAR, FROM  
INDUSTRY EXPERTS.**

# HELLO!

## **2021 was a year to remember, partly for all the wrong reasons.**

There were iconic viral moments thanks to Jackie Weaver having no authority, enough political outrage to shake a stick at, the boom of Tik Tok, the beginning of the Metaverse, these strange things called NFTs, but more importantly a vast number of industries recovering from the events of 2020.

2021 was the year of recovery, and as we head further into the roaring 20's, the question remains, will we ever fully recover, what's next and how will we continue to evolve in the changing world we live in.

Our 2022 Trend Report speaks to industry leaders as we ask them what

will be big next year, who sets the trends and their biggest challenges. Inspired by the concept of consumer led product design, we build our campaigns with an audience first approach to connect brands with their audiences - driving word of mouth and helping them thrive.

So for us it is vital to understand what consumers want and how they engage with brands and media in both the digital space and the wider world.

For that reason, we have asked some of the very best of the influencers and journalists that we work with what they think is going to be vital for businesses when building meaningful relationships with consumers in 2022.

Enjoy!

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# WHAT'S HOT IN 2022

**Tequila:** Nearly 80% of retailers plan on stocking more tequila next year and if all goes well, tequila is actually set to outsell vodka!

**Hibiscus:** Starbucks have already started doing a hibiscus iced tea, known as 'natures botox' it can be super firming and full of antioxidants and Vitamin C.

**Supper Clubs:** An underground restaurant, a home bistro or a pop-up restaurant. These will be very popular with those looking for unique dining experiences.

**Potato milk:** Oat milk's year was 2021, but here comes the humble potato to shake things up. It's "deliciously creamy, makes perfect foam in coffee, works just like any other milk". It's also highly sustainable!

**INSTA CHEFS**

**TIK TOK**

**NFTs**

**COLD WATER SWIMMING**

**SUSTAINABILITY**

**POTATO MILK**

**Sustainability:** 2022 will be all about us working together to make changes. Reducing our meat consumption, reducing plastic waste, shopping local, consuming what's in season and sustainable travel.

**SUPPER CLUBS**

**Insta Chefs:** sharing what you eat online shows is nothing new, but brands such as Mob Kitchen are changing things up. Gone are the days of BBC Good Food, these quick, snappy videos can help you become a culinary genius!

**HIBISCUS**

**Cold Water Swimming:** It can boost your immune system, gives you a natural high, improves circulation, burns calories and reduces stress! Yes, it will not be pleasant, but the rewards will be plentiful.

**TEQUILAAA**

**Tik Tok:** We will see more educational and editorial content in 2022! This move will see Facebook and its Metaverse absolutely terrified and could cause a real social media shake up.

**NFTs:** With Boohoo Man recently launching a full NFT collection of 3D clothing, it comes as no shock that NFTs will dominate in 2022. NFTs are digital works that cannot be replicated, which until now have been more often used by luxury brands. This however is all set to change...

# WHAT TO WATCH IN 2022

Before you dive into what our experts have to say, we've compiled the top 10 things we think will be 2022 trends from their interviews.

1

Trends naturally occur out of consumer need, how they get amplified is what you've got to watch. It differs across social platforms.

2

The pandemic has been a big driver for change with people demanding more from where they live. Home is not just a bed, people care much more about their own environment.

3

Visible allyship is important, there's power in big brands showing solidarity with the LG-BTQ+ community.

4

The noise of TikTok is dying out, there's now value in educator content, whether it's how to understand health, COVID or an interesting tell of a true crime story from years ago.

5

In travel, longer trips are booked, these tend to be more wellness and health focussed

6

Entry vaccine status/testing rules are here to stay within travel, restrictions continue to change as well as more forms to fill in pre travel.

7

You have to jump on a trend when it's hot, if you stall to strategise the likelihood is it'll be gone by the time you've figured it out.

8

Travelling more sustainably is something that is being talked about a lot. In the aftermath of COP 26, sustainability is in the forefront of people's minds.

9

When it comes to regeneration a big focus will be on creating genuine communities and going back to basics on what makes somewhere a great place to live.

10

For 2022, it will be vital for brands to demonstrate their support for LGBTQ+ causes all-year round, not just for pride.

# SIMON BINNS

Simon Binns is an award winning journalist and editor of LADBible, LADBible publishes shareable clips, pictures and longer form cause related campaigns. Binns previously wrote for City Life (Manchester Evening News).

## **What is important for brands when engaging with consumers in 2022?**

Just being there when they want you to be. The expectation is so immediate and they won't wait for you to find them, so depending on what platform you are speaking from you need to find a way of getting in front of them.

## **Who sets the trends?**

You need to be quick to adapt when you spot the audience going somewhere. You let them lead, then you can kind of train them to follow you, but you have to work with them rather than against them.

I think trends naturally occur out of consumer need anyway, how they then get amplified is what you've got to watch and it differs across social platforms.

A trend on TikTok lasts for 4 days then it moves on, a trend on Facebook lasts for a week, a trend on Twitter lasts for 6 hours. You just have to jump on it when it's hot, if you mess about trying to figure out a strategy to get on the trend the likelihood is it'll be gone by the time you've figured it out.

## **What has been the biggest change since Covid-19?**

Just making people feel that togetherness, like physical togetherness. People physically lose touch with each other and become used to being connected less physically and more digitally. Which is fine but I think for us, in my line of work with my team, the hardest thing is to keep that spirit of collaboration alive when you're not all sitting in the same place at the same time bouncing ideas off each other. It's really hard to replicate that across chat groups or Zoom.

## **What brand do you think connects with their audience the best?**

Obviously LAD Bible is the best. Look-



ing at local brands, I like what The Manc do because they know who their audience is.

I think in the world of brands generally, I love Greggs and what they do with their social and digital content. They are all about driving the brand by creating content for the consumers. They don't push their consumers into feel-

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‘whether you’re doing a short video or longform you’ve still got two seconds to get them in, spend it wisely.’

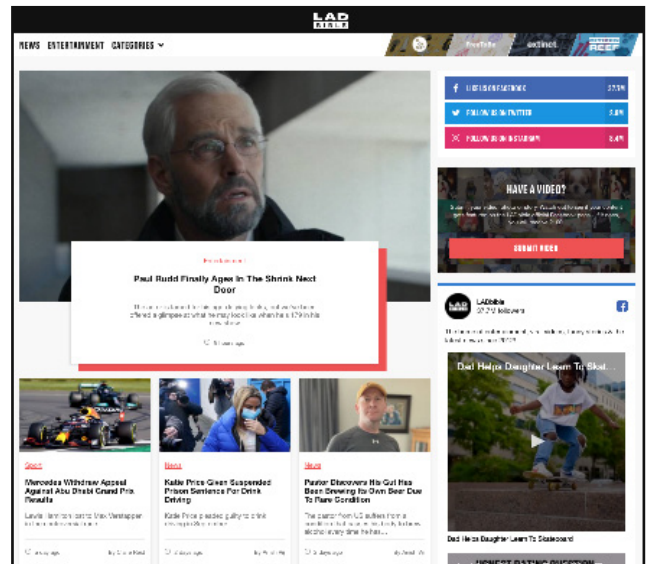
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ing like they have to buy something. It is therefore natural when they make a purchase from Greggs, they feel they are part of a community and that comes from the branding not giving too much of a shit what people think of them.

### What was 2021 defined by?

I suppose 2021 has been defined by the growth of TikTok. I think within that platform, you look at what content people like and it's so multifaceted. Now I think the noise of Tik Tok is dying out, there's real value in the educator content, for us that has been really big whenever we have done anything with it.

That kind of educator story time content which is actually putting new information in front of new audiences in a way that isn't boring to them. In a way that media brands like us have always done it, you tell stories. Those audiences will listen to their favourite creator telling the story of Ted Bundy,



even though it's a story that's been told lots of times, they care about the person who is telling it.

One of our writers wrote a good story recently on a study into why pornography teaches young people unrealistic things about sex and relationships, which we all know happens and why that is. It was 3,500 words of clutter and statistics from experts and about two thirds down the piece there was a testimony from this girl who was saying her girlfriend started slapping her during sex and she didn't know what to do about it. So we put this at the top of the piece to keep people in and it worked.

That's something you've got to think about with long form as you've still got two seconds to get them in. So whether you're doing a short video or longform you've still got two seconds to get them in, spend it wisely. I think the mix of short and long form is good, sometimes people want something a bit more in depth and a bit more detailed because throw away content is everywhere.

 @simonbinns @ladbible

# ADAM HIGGINS

Adam Higgins is founder of Capital&Centric, a property development and investment company based in Manchester. They have developed £100m worth of pioneering projects in the past 8 years, including the iconic £30m Littlewoods Complex and Bunker Building in Liverpool and the £250m Kampus in Manchester.



## **What do you think will be the most important thing for consumers in your industry in 2022?**

When it comes to regeneration a big focus will be on creating genuine communities and going back to basics on what really makes somewhere a great place to live. There's a few strands to that... one is creating stunning communal, outdoor spaces where people can (and want to) spend time together.

The other is a real focus on high quality design that puts people's experience first, that comes down to spacious rooms, quality materials, and or even something as simple as having access

to a balcony or being able to open a window, which for a long time new developments haven't included.

## **Why?**

People just don't want to live their lives in isolation in white-box apartments. They want to be part of a community where they know their neighbours, can meet and hang out with new people and are somewhere they're proud to say they live.

For many years at Capital&Centric we've not only put that at the forefront of designing new neighbourhoods, but we've also then helped foster that when people sign up to live there. We've done that really successfully at our communities such as Crusader Mill and Phoe-

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Creating calm, green outdoor spaces is essential as people recognise the importance of a connection with the natural world in a way many neglected pre-pandemic.

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nix at Piccadilly East in Manchester, where residents have been introduced and started building relationships with their neighbours before they've even moved in.



## Who decides trends?

A bit of both. Creating a new city centre neighbourhood like Kampus in Manchester takes years, from initial planning, construction and then handing over the keys to residents. It can't be too focused on trends that change quickly or rely heavily on features that will be dated or not used within a few years.

You just need to be certain you're delivering a place with character, spirit and quality – one squarely focused on facilitating the lifestyle people want to live – and people will come. We've seen that with quick take-up of apartments at Kampus.

## What has been the biggest change from Covid-19?

In a way, the Covid pandemic has been a big driver for things changing and the trend toward people demanding more from where they live. In one sense, it's made people re-evaluate what matters to them. The personal connections they really missed during lockdown, meaning people are now realising they do want to be part of a real community. On a practical point too, changing work habits mean people are spending much more time at home. Home is




not just a bed where they crash after spending hours away every day.

A focus on wellness, both physical and mental health, is also a driving factor of where people choose to live and we need to recognise property has a role in that. Creating calm, green outdoor spaces is essential as people recognise the importance of a connection with the natural world in a way many neglected pre-pandemic.

## What business do you feel connects with their audience best in your space?

Honestly, I'm really proud of Kampus and the community we're creating in Manchester city centre – not only how the brand connects with its audience, but the business owners we're attracting to part of an indie community surrounding the garden. Businesses like Nells, General Store and Pollen bakery.

We're chuffed that they've chosen Kampus as part of their next chapters. It means not only will Kampus continue to be a go-to foodie neighbourhood for Manchester, it'll inherit an army of followers already invested in the people behind the local businesses there.

 @AdamHiggins69 @CapitalCentric



# MATT HORWOOD

Matt Horwood is head of marketing and communications at the Media Trust, who believe that it's by giving everyone a voice that we'll get to a more equal society.

## **What do you think will be the most important thing in your industry in 2022?**

Visible allyship is important, and even today we know there's power in big brands showing solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community.

However, LGBTQ+ consumers are not just a community to brands, but also a currency. People are becoming acutely aware of brands slapping a rainbow on something over the summer to sell products, and visibility alone is no longer enough.

For 2022, it will be vital for brands to demonstrate their support for LGBTQ+ communities and causes all-year round, the involvement of LGBTQ+ models, creatives and people with lived experience in their creative process and campaigns, and to ensure those involved represent all LGBTQ+ people.

## **Who decides trends?**

I think there's a bit of a chicken and egg moment between brands and LGBTQ+ consumers. What we all should be aiming for is a world where brands and businesses lend their support to the community in a meaningful way (this must include digging deep into pockets), and not just for clout or to make money off a Pride-themed capsule.



## **What has been the biggest change in your industry from Covid-19?**

Brands not having the same 'platform' for their Pride activities and products, for example the absence of Pride floats and shop windows. There has been a notable dip in donations and support in kind from some charities in this instance, whereas others have stepped up and lent even more financial support than normal.

## **What brand do you think connects with their audience the best?**

Examples of brands who have run fully inclusive LGBTQ+ campaigns with diverse LGBTQ+ folk at their heart, donations to charities and demonstrable work to support LGBTQ+ people all-year.

 @Matthewhorwood @media\_trust

# CHARLIE CRAIG

Charlie Craig is the founder of Paper Plane Travel; an independent, tailor-made travel agency. She was worked in the service and travel industry for over 10 years, notably as Head of Sales and Concierge at Mr & Mrs Smith.

## **What do you think will be the most important thing for consumers in 2022?**

Policies, flexibility and being looked after right through the planning process, which is where independent travel agents come in.

It looks as if entry vaccine status/testing rules are here to stay within travel and things will be ever changing for a while yet as well as more forms to fill in pre travel so it's important, where needed, to hold a client's hand through this process. **Travel has become a little more complex but I think it feels more special than ever at the moment!**

I think as an offshoot of the time spent not travelling for many over the last 18 months, we are seeing longer trips be-

ing booked and a lean towards wellness and health incorporated into travel.

## **Who decides trends?**

As travel was restricted for so long, it feels as though it has boomed now and everyone wants to get away and make up for the trips they missed!

## **What has been the biggest change from Covid-19?**

As an independent business, I've been overwhelmed with the support from clients who may have previously used online or larger agencies but have started to use businesses like Paper Plane Travel for a personal service and to avoid long waits on a call centre phone line!

 @paperplanettravel\_



# CATHY TOOGOOD

Cathy Toogood is a freelance travel writer based in Manchester. Her words have appeared in The Telegraph Travel, Independent Travel, The Times Travel, Travel Weekly and more.

## **What do you think will be the most important thing for consumers in 2022?**

Travelling more sustainably is something that is being talked about a lot. In the last 20 months, consumers have been forced to travel differently and to look at destinations differently, and are thinking more about future trips – the destinations that they want to visit and the brands that they want to spend money with.

Plus, in the aftermath of COP26, sustainability is in the forefront of peoples' minds. As an example, The Independent's travel section is putting sustainability at the front of its travel coverage.

Travellers are more aware of why sustainability is important and that by being more responsible travellers, everyone can do their bit. So, when comparing hotels and other experiences, many travellers will consider the company and what it's doing.

## **Which brand do you think connects with their audience best in your space?**


Kuoni has communicated well with customers during the Covid-19 pandemic. It set up a travel advice hub around Covid-19 and came out as joint top in a Which? survey of package travel companies.

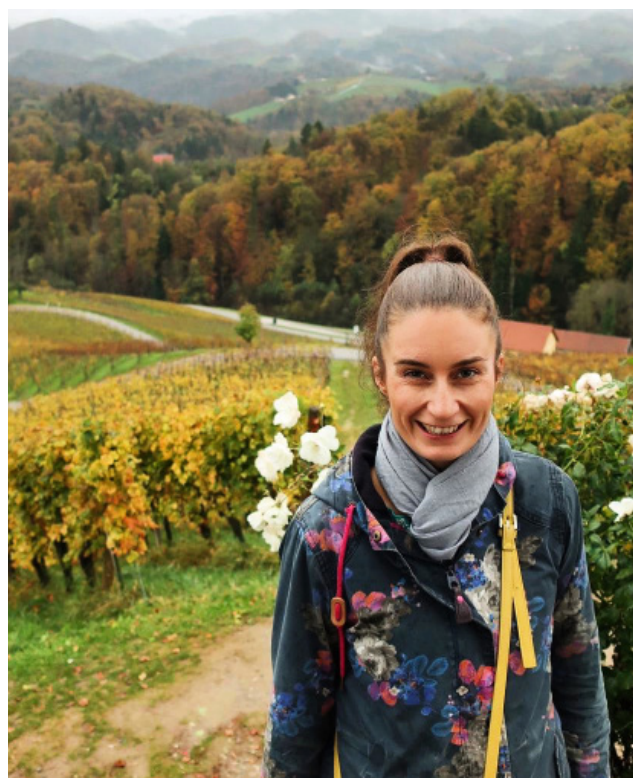
## **Who decides trends?**

In the last 20 months, the things we've needed and our focus has been very different, so items like loungewear have been popular – which I'm enjoying.

## **What has been the biggest challenge from Covid and has it been overcome?**

For travel, uncertainty and ever-changing travel rules has been a big challenge for hospitality companies. They have reacted by bringing in flexible booking policies and communicating their current Covid policy clearly.

 @CathyToogood





# JOHN MAGEE

John Magee is a retail expert at DATS' sister brand, place-making consultancy Social Rebuild. He has worked in management positions for retailers including Tesco and Debenhams, as well as managing shopping centres across the UK.

## **What do you think will be the most important thing for consumers in 2022?**

Sustainability has been a buzz word in the retail industry for many years, however there are three things happening currently that ensure this remains at the top of the agenda for retailers and consumers. First is improvements in research and the move towards total undeniability of the climate emergency.

Second is there is more awareness of climate change highlighted by the media and also additional coverage of protest and other forms of direct action by groups such as XR and Insulate Britain.

Finally the New technology such as self destructing plastic - if this type of technology proves that it can work just as well as traditional plastics then surely this is the way forward?

## **Who decides trends?**

In the retail industry changes like this are almost always driven by 2 things - the consumer being the most important one. Secondly, lots of the initiatives related to sustainability relate to cost and new tech can be very expensive when it first comes to the market (think about EVs and heat pumps). These items will hopefully become cheaper to produce which will make them more accessible to a wider audience.

## **What has been the biggest change from Covid and has it been overcome?**

We have become accustomed to daily deliveries in the pandemic, from meal deliveries to Amazon purchases. This is not likely to change and the most successful retailers in 2022 and beyond will be the ones who can keep up with the pace!

## **Which business do you feel connects with their audience best in your space?**

Lush. Its website has a huge amount of content on sustainability which looks like it is being honest and transparent. Its commitments are easy to understand and it offers regular updates on performance. This has all be encapsulated in one easy to digest slogan - leaving the world lushier than we found it.



 @socialrebuild

# DAISY WHITEHOUSE

Down At The Social's founder, Daisy, has over 20 years experience heading up consumer PR & social media campaigns. Daisy is a profound PR practitioner with a love for big stunts and campaigns that generate maximum impact.

## **What is important for brands when engaging with consumers in 2022?**

For me, it's about considering what it is that the consumer wants and needs from your brand.

It's about taking yourself out of the months of blood, sweat and tears that got you to the place where you are ready to go to market and being brutally honest about what media, influencers and consumers want from what you have to sell or promote.

So many business people make the mistake of thinking that they have done something extraordinary, and therefore all journalists will naturally want to write about it. But what is the call to action for their readers? What is in it for them? Marketers need to drill down into the essence of what makes their story relatable and present this.

Similarly on social media, what will make your content likeable or shareable. What will drive genuine interest for your consumer. Resist the temptation to sell, sell, sell - consumers aren't stupid, they know that's why you're there, but they want to get to know you a bit more first.

If brands can truly understand what it is about what they do that rings true with



their target audience, then they will be on the way to building advocates who will buy from them and tell their networks why they do. That endorsement, be it from a consumer, a journalist or an influencer, will be the truest form of word of mouth.

## **Who sets the trends?**

Consumers and brands that listen to their customers. And algorithms of course. There is a huge amount of circumstance in the mix too.

When we launched DATS, our first creds said that we help brands and businesses to bring their PR and social media activity in line with constantly shifting consumer behaviour. We have seen consumer behaviour shift in seismic amounts over the past 2 years. Online, offline, zoom quizzes,

zoom gin tasting, zoom cooking classes, Amazon, shop local, home delivery, eating outside. It doesn't matter what the trend is or who sets it, you just need to keep on top of what's hot right now.

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The people are at the heart of the Peloton experience and I'm convinced they're all my best friends on Instagram so they must be doing something right!

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### What has been the biggest change since Covid-19?

Change is constant and the most successful companies and people have been those that thrive amongst it. As we see big retailers fall away and large comms agencies laying off staff, we have seen young, creative, nimble businesses in their element.

Many of our clients don't need to get their marketing plan signed off 12 months in advance, and they don't need to go via the board to completely change strategy on a new opening. Because of this they have been able to flex where necessary.

We're now planning in three month chunks with contingencies and plan Bs becoming the norm. It suits the market, but it also suits PR and social media perfectly. What was a brilliant idea yesterday isn't relevant today. But it's okay because we can go with plan B instead. After all, Facebook probably changed the algorithm last night anyway!

### What brand do you think connects with their audience the best?

I can't answer this question without saying Aldi and Greggs. They don't take themselves too seriously and they know who they are. We have all sniggered over the 'Free Cuthbert' campaign.

Nike.



A brand I feel never let's me down is Sweaty Betty. They make knock out work-out gear, but more than that they are a lifestyle brand. From January social content full of classes to kick start the year, to the empowering #IAMASWEATYBETTY ambassador programme and an inspiring events programme (when they were a thing), I feel like the people behind the brand know exactly what consumers need and want from them. I would never scroll past their content.

Also in the fitness world - Peloton. The people are at the heart of the Peloton experience and I'm convinced they're all my best friends on Instagram so they must be doing something right!

### What was 2021 defined by?

Change, community and collaboration. The more we work together to learn, support one another and focus on meaningful connections we will grow as brands, businesses and people.



# DATS IN 2021

**Feeding Families with Simon Wood**



**The world's first Wok Pan Pizza**



**International Women's Day with Diabrese Rum**



**Welcomed Kampus onto our portfolio**



**Launched London-based disruptive bar, Bar Liber**



**Manchester Pride Festival 2021**



**Clemantines Hotel Choc Orange Campaign**



**Spooktacular Festival in Glasgow**



**Two new alcohol clients! Skinny Lager + Beartown**



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**We immerse ourselves in the DNA of our clients' businesses, focussing on long term relationships that enable us to deliver real impact.**

**By combining this with a deep understanding of what makes consumers tick, we create campaigns that drive true engagement between brands and their customers.**

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