

**The Digital
Marketer's Almanac**

2021



Table of Contents

Introduction	01
An Unpredictable Year	02
Our 2020 Predictions: A Look Back	04
2020: A Year in Review	08
Big Digital Marketing Trends	10
The State of Social Media	16
The State of Search	17
Vision for 2021	18
Digital Marketing Snapshot: SaaS	19
Digital Marketing Snapshot: eCommerce	21
Emerging Digital Advertising Platforms	22
2021 Digital Marketer's Calendar	23

Introduction

First things first. Why are we publishing our first EmberTribe almanac?

An almanac is an annually published tool containing valuable information for a variety of different groups.

What's interesting about the upcoming year? What's relevant for a livelihood or profession? Fun facts? Try an almanac. Rising trends? Find it in an almanac. Predicting a global pandemic? Well if you predicted the coronavirus, buy a lottery ticket.

We developed this Digital Marketer's Almanac on the same principles as any other almanac: To provide readers with a detailed overview of what they should expect in the coming year.

We hope you find this almanac to be full of handy, useful information for the upcoming year.

To your continued growth,
The Team at EmberTribe



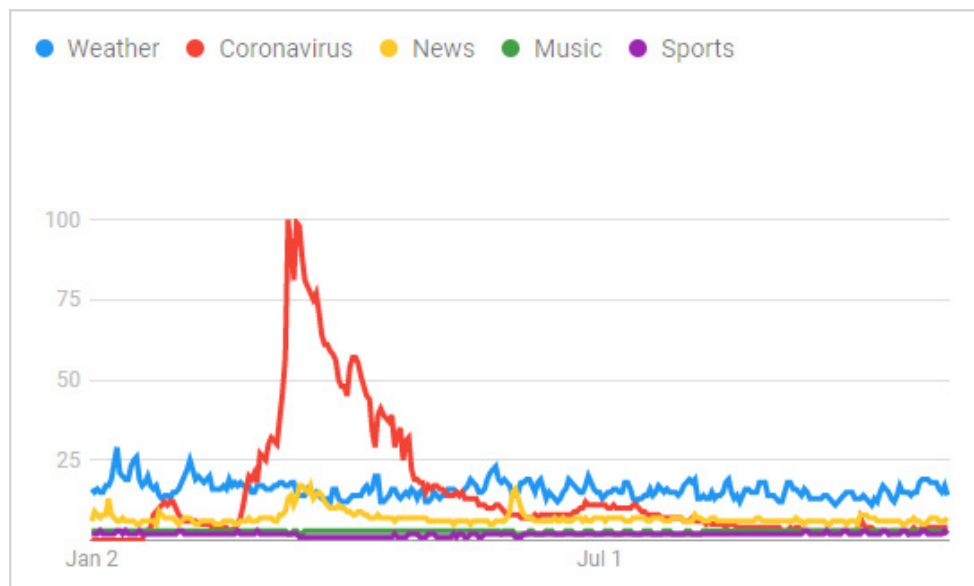
An Unpredictable Year

At the end of 2020, our team chimed in on what the new decade would bring to the advancement of marketing and technology. Before we dig into what we got right and what missed the mark, let's talk about the unpredictable: COVID-19.

COVID-19 Changed The Game

Coronavirus ruled national discourse for much of the year, and especially dominated search in Q1 and Q2 of 2020.

COVID-19 resulted in closures and lockdowns, and greatly impacted workers across industries and changed consumer shopping habits.



Source: [Google Trends](#)



SNAPSHOT

More workers shifted to remote/work-from-home set-ups.

eCommerce sales skyrocketed.

Shipping demands reached new highs.

Q4 holiday sales kicked off earlier than ever before.

More marketers are aiming for authenticity to connect with audiences.

What can we learn from the unpredictable events of 2020?

Some key takeaways for us are:

- Marketing must be nimble, whether you're talking about adjusting messaging or budgets.
- The best way to keep audiences engaged, even in a time of crisis, is quality content.
- A solid unique value proposition can be your secret weapon for not getting lost in the noise.
- Smart marketers will always, always find a way to create fresh campaigns.

Our 2020 Predictions: A Look Back

At the beginning of this year, some of our team made predictions about marketing trends we expected to see gain footing in 2020. Here's what we envisioned for digital marketing in 2020, and a followup on what came of our predictions. Was our crystal ball telling the truth?



JP Vander Linden
Director of Operations

OUR PREDICTION:

SMS will become a more common marketing communication channel.

90% of text messages are read within 3 minutes, meaning it's practically instant and guaranteed to be seen. There are over 49 million people predicted to opt-in for SMS marketing by 2020.

SMS has less aggressive spam filters, meaning your content WILL get to the eyes of your customers. At the same time, you don't want to waste people's time by "spamming" them through SMS either. If you do use this channel make sure what you are sending is valuable.

While we wouldn't say to go "all-in" on SMS for 2020, if it's not part of your mix now, it needs to be.

VERDICT:

True

We saw a shift in marketing investments due in large part to COVID-19. According to a mid-year survey conducted by CommerceNext, 56% percent of respondents planned to increase their investment in messaging/SMS platforms.



Courtney Corner
Senior Growth Specialist

OUR PREDICTION:

Chatbots will help usher in conversational marketing.

Email CTRs dropped in 2019 ~8-9%, with fewer people clicking through emails, brands will have to look to chatbots, etc. to reach their customers. This is also a part of the larger personalization trend. Conversational marketing feels more trusted and will continue to gain more traction in the new year.

VERDICT:

True

Chatbots are proving to be a huge asset to companies, especially when it comes to handling customer questions and concerns. In a study from Accenture, the professional services company found that 80% of chat sessions have been resolved by chatbot alone, meaning that with good design and implementation this tool can be a huge time saver for customers and businesses.

While this shows that chatbots are a big asset for customer experience, we also know that the line between CX and marketing is increasingly becoming blurred. Good CX through chatbots is nothing less than a boon to marketing teams.

OUR PREDICTION:

Consumers will take more control of their privacy.

People will want more control over their data in 2020. We anticipate seeing Privacy options, ad blocking, and the whole data protection arena become increasingly important. With marketing constantly getting more personalized and contextual, people will want more ability to control where/which ads they see.

2019 was the year of lawsuits and awareness of big tech's data issues. As a result we suspect to see more regulations put in place in 2020. California CCPA comes into effect in 2020 and we suspect we'll see more countries/regions adopt similar regulations.

VERDICT:

True

Data protection is the way forward. From the inception of GDPR in the European Union in 2018 to the 2020 enactment of "California Consumer Privacy Act" (CCPA) in the US, consumers are being encouraged to take more control of what information they give up and how to stay informed about personal data collection.



Chris Grippo
Account Director

OUR PREDICTION:

We'll see movement toward more in-app functionality.

This is not a surprise, as we were already seeing this shift with Instagram Shopping, Pinterest Shopping, Google Shopping, new Facebook Polls, and even accelerated mobile pages (AMP). Building on in-app functionality improves the user experience but ultimately keeps the user engaged with the app.

VERDICT:

True

Instagram Shopping has become more robust, Facebook Shops made its debut, and Pinterest introduced new ways for users to shop within their app.



Jayca Pike
Account Director

OUR PREDICTION:

Marketing will move toward running micro-campaigns.

Marketers are moving toward using hyper-personalization and targeted testing to adapt marketing strategies near real-time. This means moving away from timelining a hard and fast marketing process months in advance, and focusing on systematic testing to get data and optimize ads.

VERDICT:

True

No shock here since EmberTribe has been doing this for years. However, for marketers rooted in traditional marketing strategies that rely on incomplete data, this shift could prove highly profitable as they discover new audiences and angles through testing.

2020: A Year in Review

Despite the unpredictability of 2020, we saw some big trends carry through and continue from previous years. We also saw some trends take off unexpectedly due to current events. Some social media platforms saw a meteoric rise in popularity, and some saw controversy. (Or in the case of TikTok, some saw both.)

Let's unpack what happened in digital marketing in 2020.



Mobile browsing popularity continues to rise.

Mobile internet usage keeps climbing, in large part thanks to the rise of advanced mobile devices.

83%

Adults in the US accessed the internet through their mobile phone

86.7%

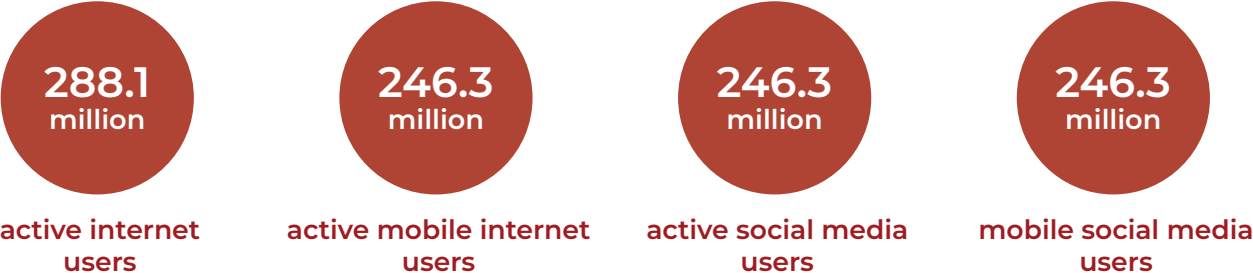
Projected number of U.S. adults using mobile internet in 2023

52.3 million

Projected number of mobile-only internet users in 2021

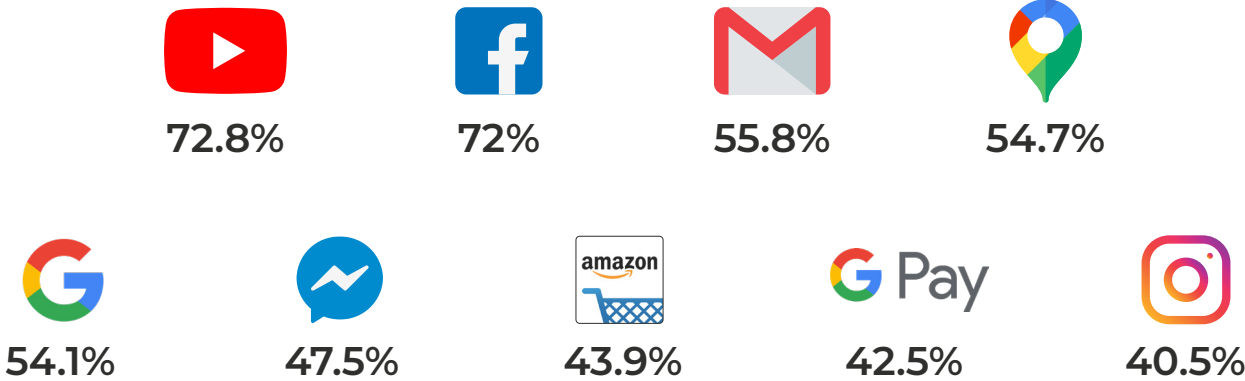
Don't throw your laptop out the window just yet, but do consider how a shift to mobile-only internet usage seriously affects how marketing efforts are being delivered and received by a growing segment of the US population.

U.S. Digital Population Breakdown*



*As of January 2020. Source: [DataReportal](#)

Top Smartphone Apps By U.S. Mobile Audience Reach*



*As of September 2020. Source: [Comscore, Inc.](#)

Big Digital Marketing Trends

Life moves pretty fast and we all have to take trends with a grain of salt. From dancing videos to the memefication of brands on social media, there's a lot of ebb and flow in the digital marketing space.

We love to watch these flash trends emerge, but the main goal is always keeping an eye on the prize. With that in mind, we've been keeping tabs on these digital marketing trends that seem to be here to stay.

Marketing Personalization

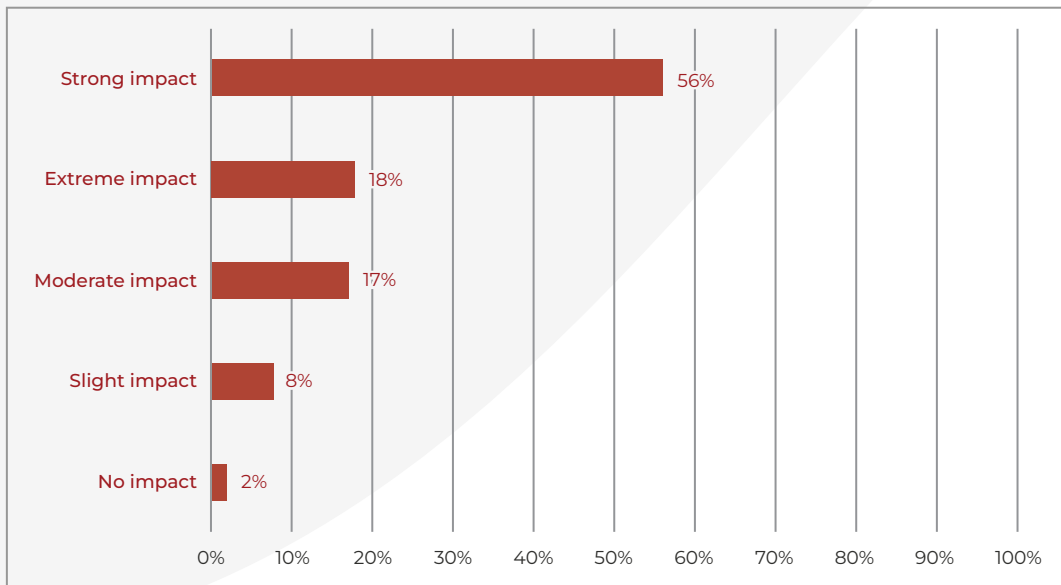
Creepy? Effective? Both?

Marketing personalization utilizes data to deliver targeted messages to prospective customers. This approach tosses the “cast a wide net” principle out the window, and instead adopts a butterfly net approach. Or, rather, tons of butterfly nets tailored to uniquely specific butterflies.

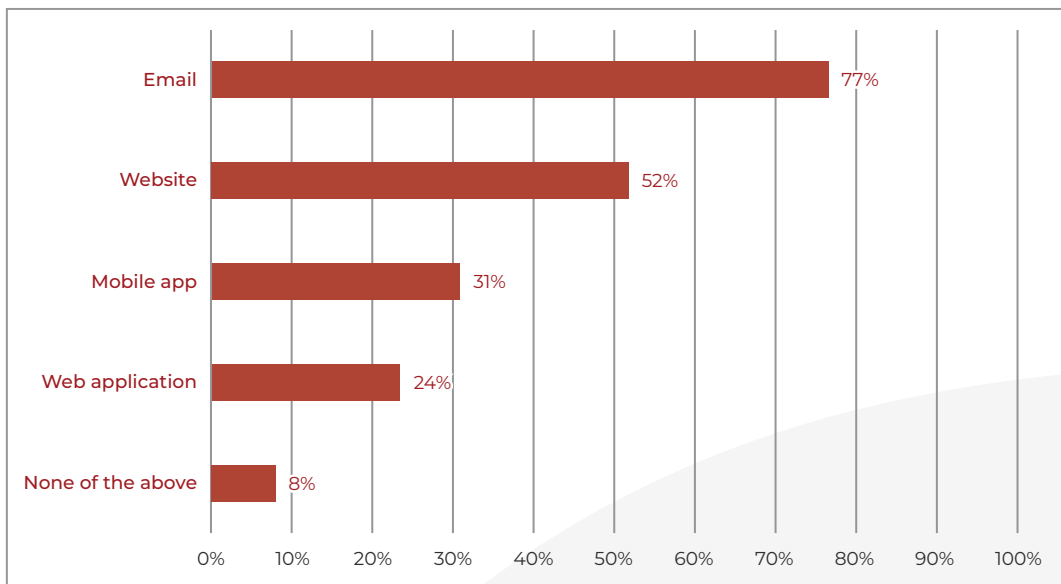
Personalized marketing strategies strive to meet the needs of audience segments through detailed analytics and creative content.

The goal of marketing personalization is to reverse “marketing blindness” that audiences have developed after years of being bombarded with irrelevant, impersonal messages.

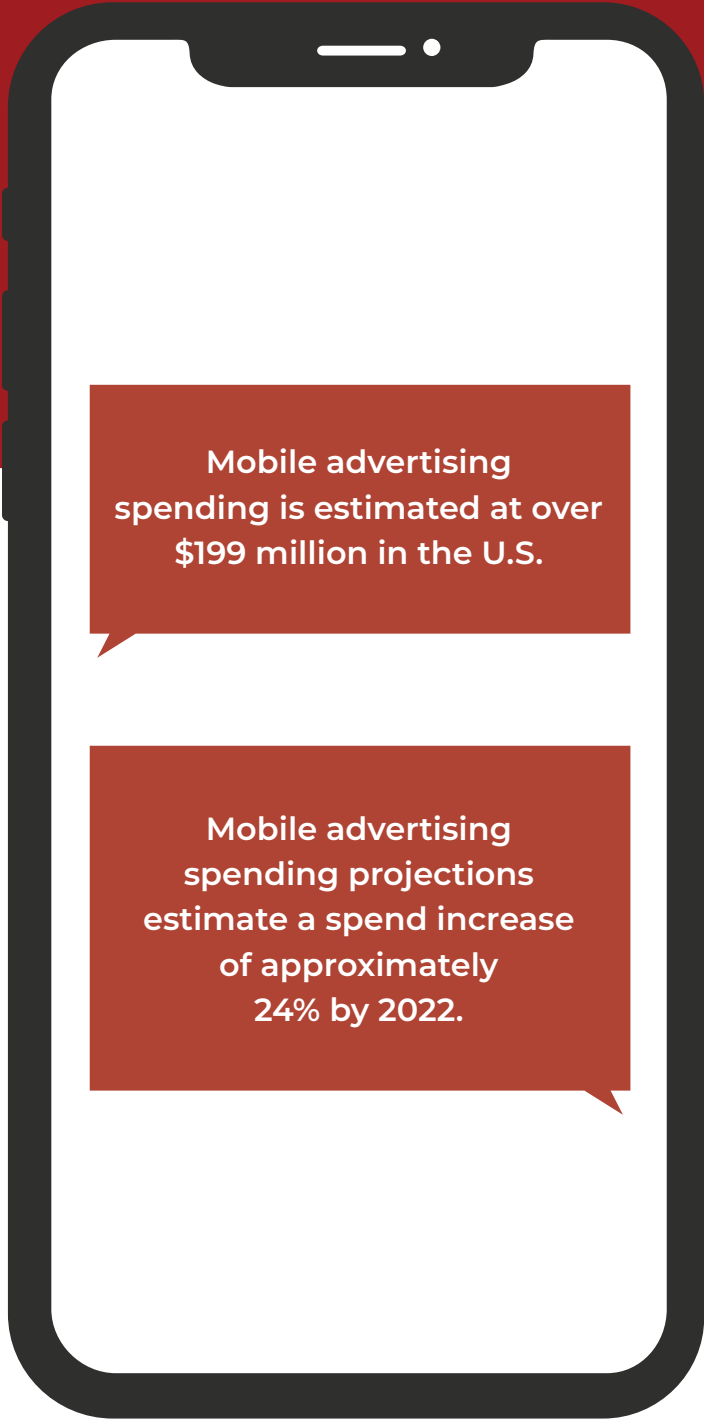
What do marketers think the impact of personalization is on advancing customer relationships?



Where are digital marketers using personalization?



Source: [Evergage](#)



Mobile advertising spending is estimated at over \$199 million in the U.S.

Mobile advertising spending projections estimate a spend increase of approximately 24% by 2022.

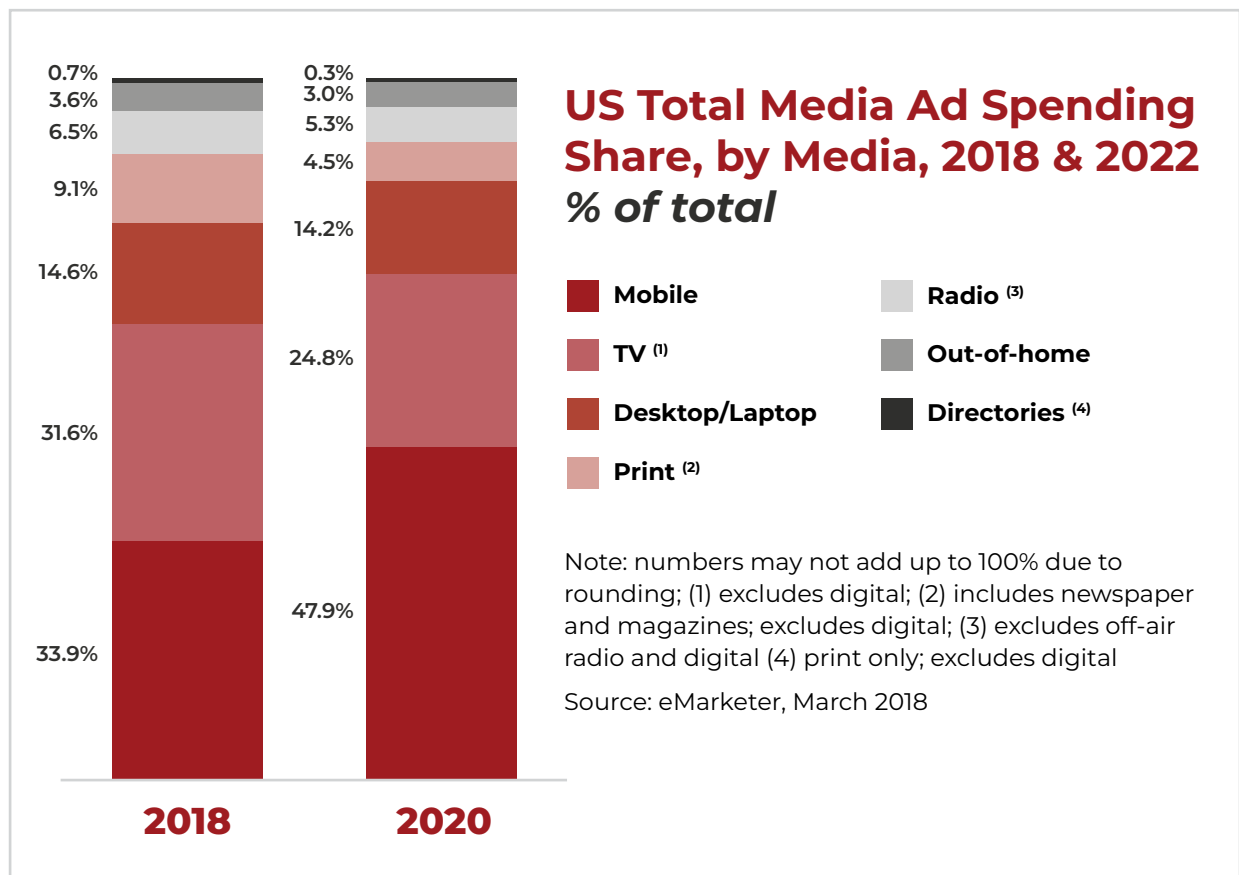
Mobile Advertising Spending

More and more people are browsing the internet and interacting with social media solely on mobile devices. Digital marketers need to adapt to changing browsing habits and develop mobile-friendly assets and advertising strategies.

Source: [Zenith Media](#)

Distribution of Advertising Spending

Digital advertising spend exceeded tv, print, and radio advertising in 2018, and is projected to continue dominating media ad spending.



Key Stats:

- Digital advertising spend in the U.S. is estimated to increase from 129 billion U.S. dollars in 2019 to nearly 188 billion by the end of 2022.
- During this period, spending on mobile ads is expected to grow by close to 50 billion dollars.
- U.S. marketers spending on mobile advertising are moving away from display toward video ads.

Source: [eMarketer](#)

Digital Ad Spend

Who is spending the most on digital advertising and are you doing enough to keep up with competitors in your industry? Digital advertising is only going to get more competitive.

The time to carve out your path for growth through paid traffic is now.

Digital ad spend in the U.S. is projected to increase by >13% by the end of 2021.

Digital ad spend in the U.S. is projected to increase by > 33% by 2023.

This projection includes advertising on personal computers, mobile phones, tablets and other internet-capable devices. Examples include: search, display, email, paid social, and native.

Source: [eMarketer](#)

Top 5 Digital Advertising Spenders in U.S.



RETAIL

21.9%



AUTOMOTIVE

12.3%



FINANCIAL SERVICES

12.1%



TELECOM

10.4%

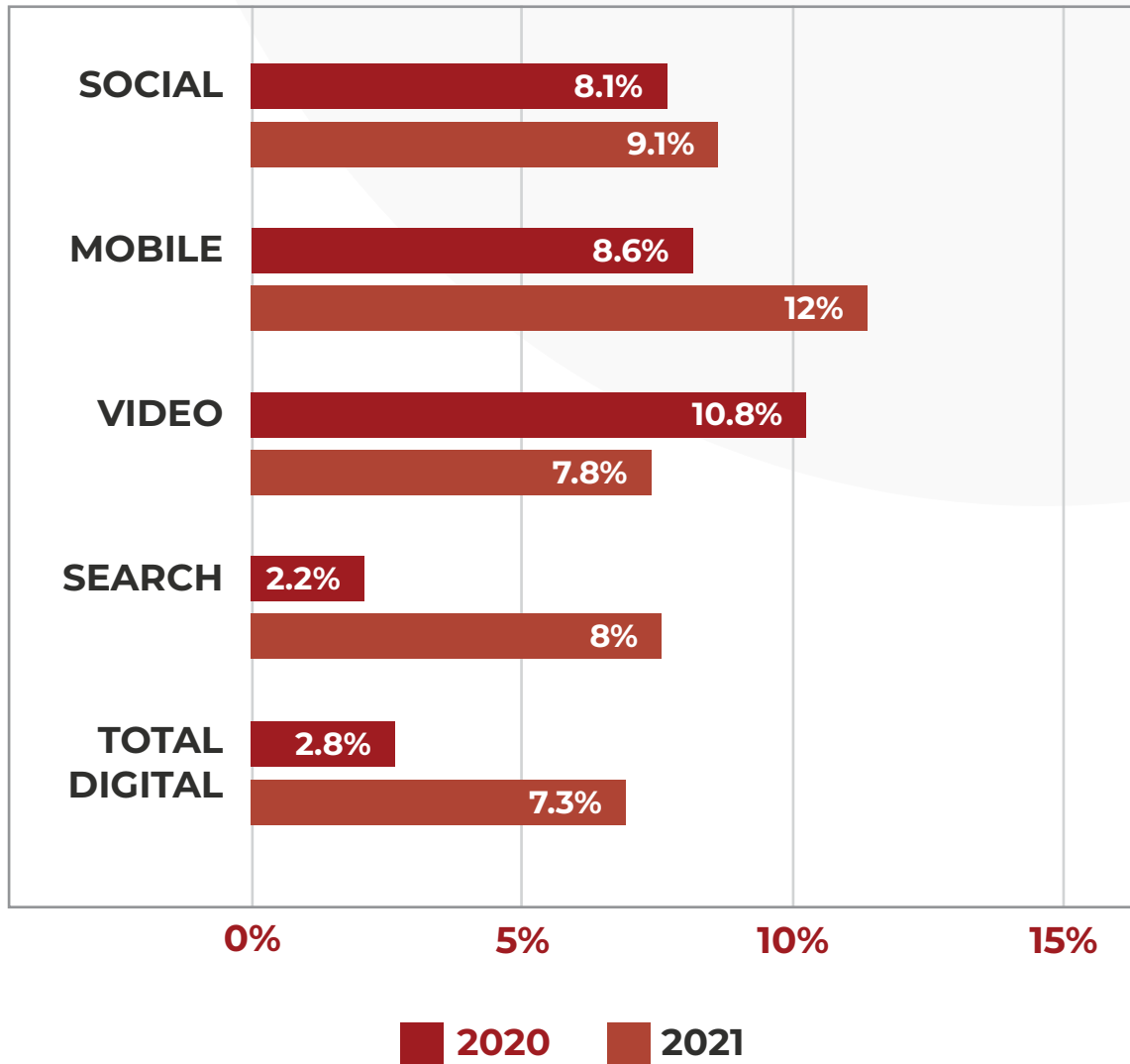


CONSUMER PACKAGED GOODS

8.6%

Source: [eMarketer](#)

Year-Over-Year Digital Advertising Revenue Growth Projections



Source: [MagnaGlobal](#)

The State of Social Media

5 Biggest Social Media Platforms



255 million monthly active users in the U.S. and Canada
\$80.93 billion projected 2020 revenue



36 million monetizable daily active users in the U.S.
\$1.62 billion projected 2020 revenue



174 million users in the U.S.
50 million+ companies listed on LinkedIn for Business globally



1 billion monthly active users globally
>2 million monthly advertisers



90 million daily active users in the U.S. and Canada
\$1.7 billion in revenue as of 2019 (primarily through advertising)

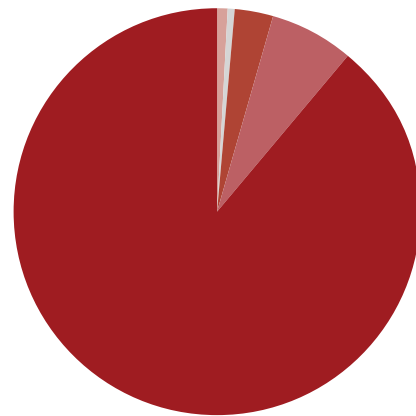
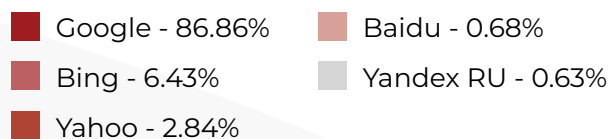
Source: [Search Engine Journal](#)

The State of Search

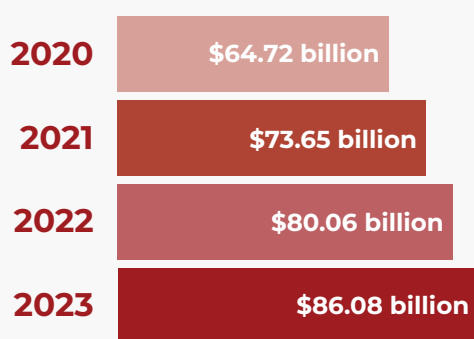
2021 projected search advertising spending in U.S. is **\$73.65 BILLION**

Source: [eMarketer](#)

Global market share of leading search engines (via desktop)*



*As of July 2020. Source: [Statista](#)



Search advertising spending forecast from 2020-2023*

*These figures include such advertising as native ads, sponsored links, paid listings, and SEO

Source: [eMarketer](#)

Vision for 2021

2020 was unpredictable—dare we say...unprecedented—and challenged digital marketers in new ways. If we learned anything in 2020, it's that expectations and plans are no replacement for creativity and agility in your marketing strategies.

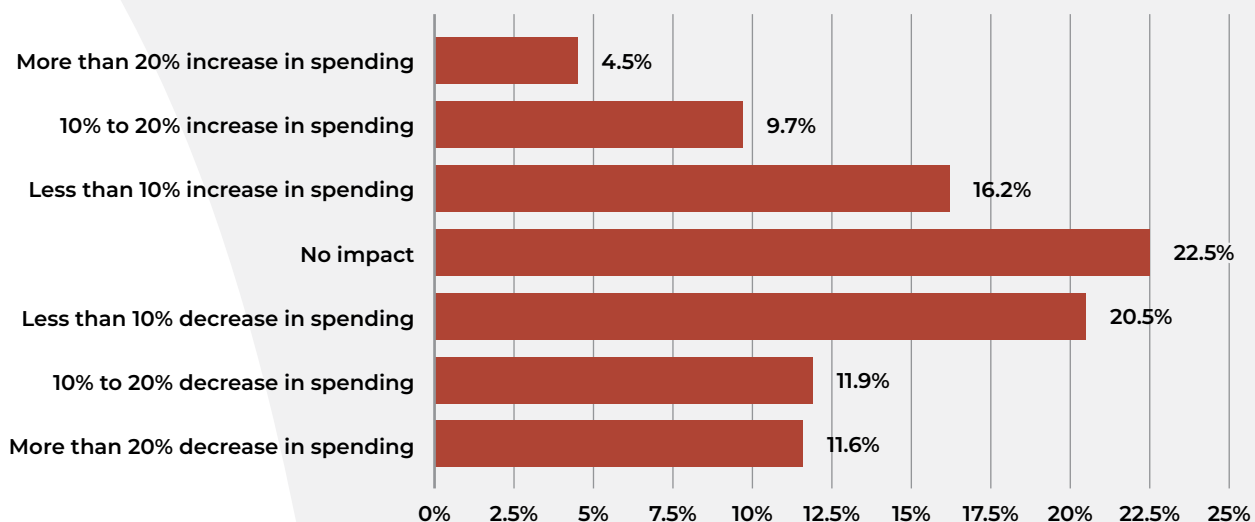
Setting aside the data and trends, here are some hard lessons marketers learned in 2020 that they should carry into 2021.

- Invest time and energy into your crisis communications, so that you can have strategic responses prepared for a variety of special circumstances.
- Diversify your online offerings, especially if you specialize in a specific niche. For example, online workshops can become on-demand webinars that allow you and your target audience more flexibility.
- Stay flexible with your plans and be prepared to pivot.
- Good user experience is a requirement, not an optional feature.
- Have a clear understanding of your brand and your brand values.

Digital Marketing Snapshot: SaaS

COVID-19's impact on company SaaS spending worldwide.*

The impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on companies' software as a service (SaaS) spending worldwide in 2020

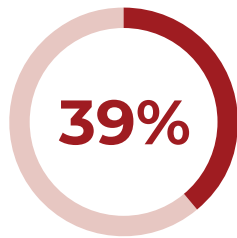


*As of May 2020. Source: [IDC](#)

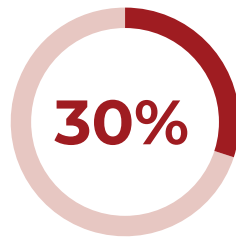
Software-as-a-Service makes up **66.9%** of worldwide public cloud services with **19.8%** year-over-year growth.*

*As of 2019. Source: [IDC](#)

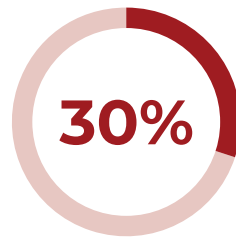
Leading uses for SaaS among small-to-medium businesses in the U.S. in 2018.



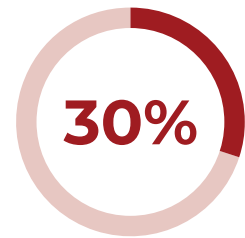
**FILE
SHARING**



**ONLINE BACKUP
AND STORAGE**



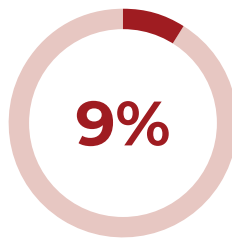
**PAYROLL
AND HR**



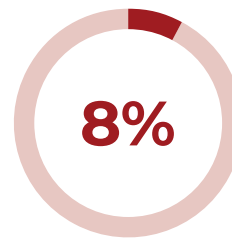
**ONLINE
ACCOUNTING**



VDI



**HELP DESK AND
SUPPORT**



ONLINE CRM

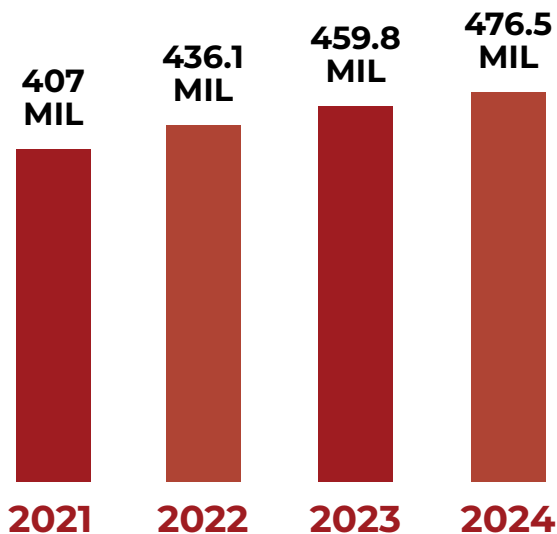
Source: [Parallels](#)

Trends to Watch:

- More businesses are using AI to optimize and increase productivity.
- SaaS companies are taking notice of the move toward mobile and adopting mobile-friendly and mobile-first approaches.
- A shift away from SaaS solutions as one-size-fits-all to client-based customization.

Digital Marketing Snapshot: eCommerce

Projected eCommerce Growth (in millions)

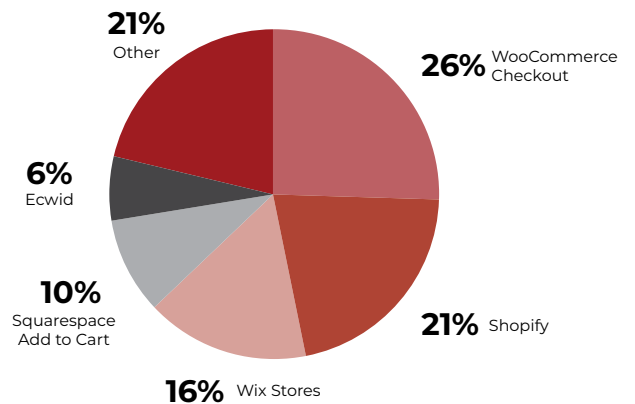


Source: [Statista Digital Market Outlook](#)

Market Share of eCommerce Software Platforms in U.S.*

eCommerce Usage Distribution in the United States

Distribution for websites using eCommerce technologies



Total mobile retail eCommerce sales in the U.S. increased by **317.63%** between 2015-2020.

Source: [eMarketer](#)

Top In eCommerce Usage Distribution in the United States

Technology	Website	%
WooCommerce Checkout	1,480,820	20.22
Shopify	1,236,648	16.88
Wix Stores	933,401	12.74
Squarespace Add to Cart	553,400	7.56
Ecwid	360,124	4.92
OpenCart	140,933	1.92

*As of April 2020. Source: [BuiltWith](#)

Trends to Watch:

- Using social commerce to boost sales.
- Implementing interactive technology for customers to experience products while online shopping.
- Brands choosing to sell direct-to-consumer over marketplace.
- Free shipping is becoming the norm.

Emerging Digital Advertising Platforms

Facebook, Instagram, and Google may rule the roost, but they're not the only players in the advertising game.

We're setting our sights on these alternative digital advertising platforms that demonstrate a ton of potential for reaching target audiences in 2021.

TWITCH

If you're not familiar with Twitch yet, you will be soon. This live streaming platform gets massive audiences, creates influencers, and is slowly but surely becoming the new "tv" for millions.

SPOTIFY

Audio ads may not be your first instinct, but with a wide-reaching platform like Spotify, your message can reach a lot of ears...without a lot of the competition.

HULU

Hulu now offers a self-service ads solution for small businesses. The service is currently in beta, but if you're itching to get your product in front of folks binge-watching their favorite TV shows, this is your chance.

REVCCONTENT

This service offers native advertising solutions that focus on quality over quantity. If you haven't had success with the big names in native but want to give it another shot, this could be your next win.

PANDORA

You don't have to silo your audio ads to Spotify alone. Pandora offers similar advantages with options to target your audiences with seamless audio and a persistent visual component.

TIKTOK

Watching the journey of TikTok in 2020 has been a rollercoaster. However, with the short-form video platform officially joining the ads game, brands seeking out younger crowds should be making TikToks.

SNAPCHAT

This social media platform isn't new, but it is continually growing. Snapchat taps into interactive possibility through filters and AR experiences that give marketers a chance to engage their audiences.

BUYSELLADS

The BuySellAds self-serve advertising platform stands out thanks to its laser-like SaaS/Tech focus. Even better, the ad formats aren't limited to just native.

REDDIT

Reddit is one of the most popular sites on the internet, making its advertising arm very intriguing. The traffic is relatively inexpensive and the users are very engaged. However, PPC marketers should tread carefully on Reddit until they understand the platform and communities, which can help make or break your success rates.

QUORA

This site pulls a lot of traffic from people asking questions, from the common to the esoteric. What makes this a fantastic platform to consider is that you can target your ads to the very people looking for a solution like yours, all on a site they trust.

2021 Digital Marketer's Calendar

DATE	HOLIDAY	DAY
January 1, 2021	New Year's Day	Friday
January 18, 2021	Martin Luther King Day	Monday
January 24, 2021	Belly Laugh Day	Sunday
February 2, 2021	Groundhog Day	Tuesday
February 12, 2021	Lincoln's Birthday	Friday
February 14, 2021	Valentine's Day	Sunday
February 15, 2021	Presidents Day and Washington's Birthday	Monday
February 16, 2021	Mardi Gras Carnival (New Orleans)	Tuesday
March 14, 2021	Daylight Saving (Start)	Sunday
March 17, 2021	St. Patrick's Day	Wednesday
April 1, 2021	April Fool's Day	Thursday
April 2, 2021	Good Friday	Friday
April 4, 2021	Easter	Sunday
April 5, 2021	Easter Monday	Monday
April 22, 2021	Earth Day	Thursday
May 5, 2021	Cinco de Mayo	Wednesday
May 9, 2021	Mother's Day	Sunday
May 15, 2021	Armed Forces Day	Saturday
May 23, 2021	Pentecost	Sunday
May 24, 2021	Pentecost Monday	Monday
May 31, 2021	Memorial Day	Monday
June 14, 2021	Flag Day	Monday
June 20, 2021	Father's Day	Sunday
July 4, 2021	Independence Day	Sunday
July 25, 2021	Parents' Day	Sunday
September 6, 2021	Labor Day	Monday
September 11, 2021	Patriot Day or September 11th	Saturday
September 12, 2021	Grandparents' Day	Sunday
September 16, 2021	Stepfamily Day	Thursday
September 17, 2021	Citizenship Day	Friday
September 24, 2021	Native American Day	Friday
October 11, 2021	Columbus Day/Indigenous People's Day	Monday
October 16, 2021	Boss's Day	Saturday
October 16, 2021	Sweetest Day	Saturday
October 31, 2021	Halloween	Sunday
November 7, 2021	Daylight Saving (End)	Sunday
November 11, 2021	Veterans' Day	Thursday
November 25, 2021	Thanksgiving	Thursday
November 26, 2021	Black Friday	Friday
November 29, 2021	Cyber Monday	Monday
December 7, 2021	Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	Tuesday
December 25, 2021	Christmas Day	Saturday
December 31, 2021	New Year's Eve	Friday



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