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# Marketing in the platform age:

How to transform and drive growth in a connected ecosystem

Short-term digital marketing is a must when meeting real-time demands. Successful brands are combining this with long-term, value-driven marketing to engage consumers on a new level – especially at a time of economic uncertainty when trust in brands becomes critical.

The new ecosystem of digital platforms is driving a shift in marketing trends and consumer engagement. Meeting customers' immediate demands while building sustainable growth can present a daunting challenge for businesses attempting to steer a path through an ever-shifting digital landscape.

Today's marketing and media ecosystem is dominated by digital platforms that go beyond geographical boundaries, connecting people like never before. These online spaces are the new "countries" where people live their lives, transacting, sharing, and creating. The onus is on organisations to adapt their marketing strategies to meet these expectations or risk falling behind their competitors.

"The levers of growth are changing," says Adam Gerhart, CEO of global media and marketing services company Mindshare. "There is now borderless platform connectivity that is empowering the consumer to demand more from brands. These new platforms and consumer dynamics are compounding and challenging conventional notions of growth."

# A better way to understand people

With consumers more empowered to call the shots, there is a newfound opportunity for brands to prioritise lifetime customer value over short-term sales. Getting locked into acquisition churn and burn is unlikely to drive sustainable growth and a narrow focus on optimising the sale alone is a zero-sum game.

It is no longer just about how to reach consumers; it is also about understanding what motivates them in much greater detail and then helping businesses to plan and buy these audiences based on their motivations or emotions across digital platforms at scale.

Winning means winning a consumer's trust and becoming the brand they value and can align their values with – which is doubly important in tighter economic conditions. And to truly grow, brands will need to succeed across multiple platform ecosystems, both their own and the GAFA (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon) giants.

“The way that brands talk to a person matters. A brand needs to acknowledge the multitude of dimensions of that individual as a complex human being

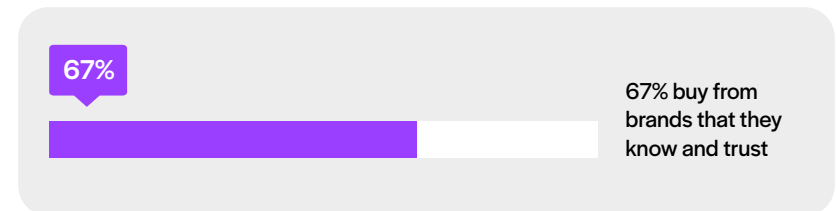
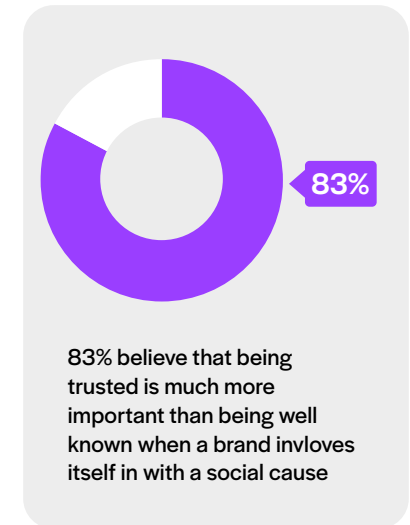
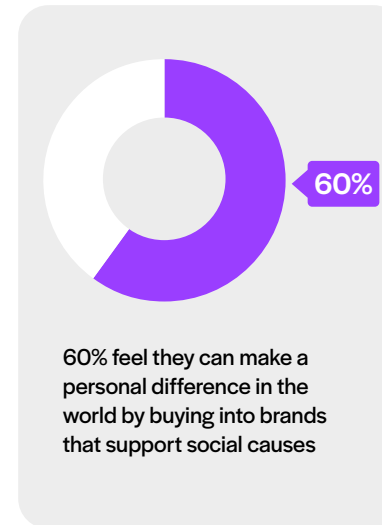
and not just someone to sell products to. In the past, digital marketing has made a lot of assumptions about people. It is easy to put someone in a box,” says Victoria Cook, global chief data strategy and insights officer at Mindshare.

She argues that organisations should be considering both context and platform when connecting with audiences. Building trust starts with acknowledging the fluidity of human identity.

Cook continues: “Brands need quality data that captures this complexity. It is really about combining data that fuses accuracy and empathy.”

There are several ways to approach this evolving landscape. Mindshare is tapping into what it refers to as “good growth” which requires an ability to deliver predictable outcomes at scale through data while also accounting for empathy and insight into consumer motivations. This puts people at the heart of growth strategies. Their implementation of “precisely human intelligence”, which balances and integrates accuracy and empathy to drive growth, is the next step.

Across 25 markets consumers are prioritising brands that align with their beliefs



*Audience Origin Brand Purpose Study, 2022*

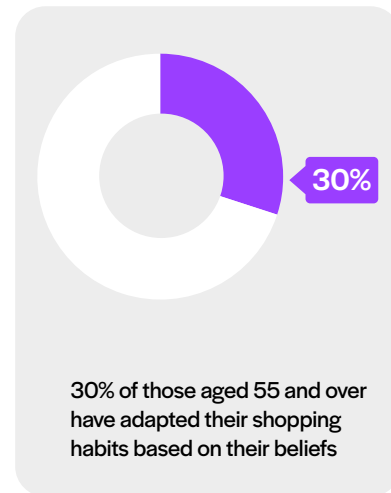
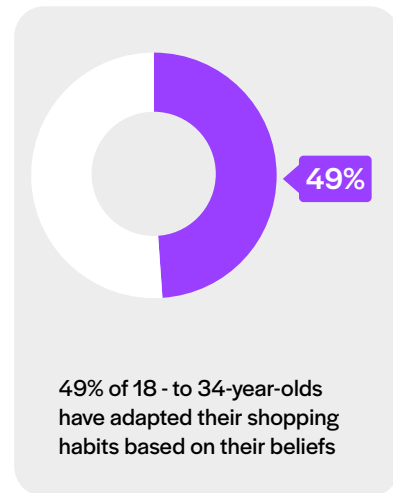
“These new platforms and consumer dynamics are compounding and challenging conventional notions of growth”

The proprietary Audience Origin data service is the bedrock of this approach, holding extensive, first-party consumer data around interests, behaviours, media consumption and decisions about purchases and spending across 74 markets. "This human intelligence allows us to help our clients use their media with the intention to meet that changing consumer demand," says Gerhart.

Machine learning products powered by precisely human intelligence are a means of getting to grips with the nuances of audiences at scale. By taking empathy data and connecting

it to precision data, businesses can better understand consumers' motivations, mindsets, and emotions.

### Younger generations are behind a value shift in purchasing decisions



Audience Origin Brand Purpose Study, 2022



# Looking to Asia for the future of marketing

Asia's harnessing of digital platforms for marketing purposes is very advanced and significantly different to that in the rest of the world.

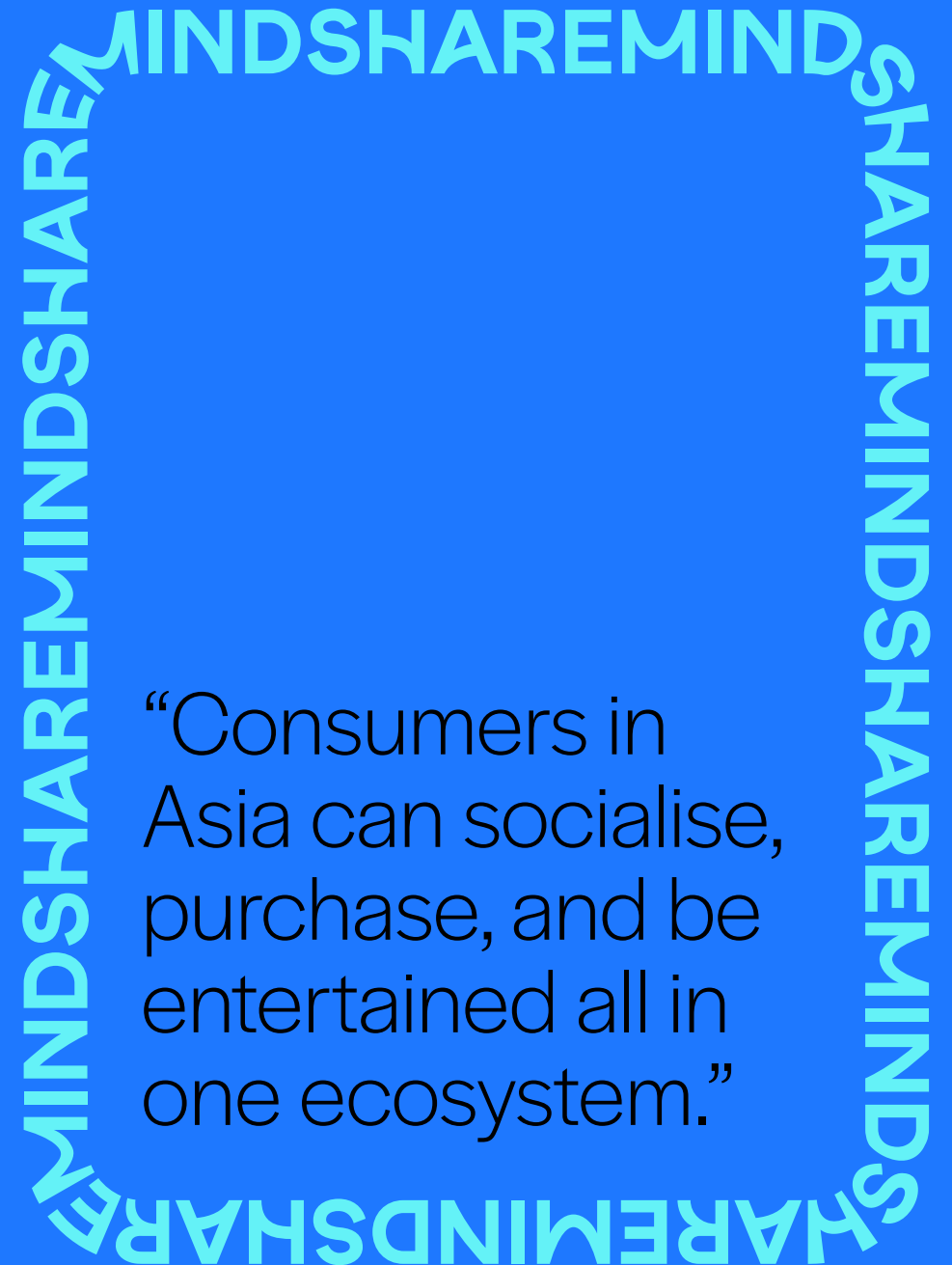
Ecommerce penetration is broadly similar in Europe and Asia, at 78 per cent and 74 per cent respectively. The differences emerge when evaluating mobile usage. 85 per cent of Asia-Pacific consumers use mobile for online shopping compared to just 47 per cent in the UK. A recent proprietary GroupM study across Asia Pacific found 82 per cent of respondents said that they purchased via online shopping platforms. This is not that different from other regions. However, what is notably different is that 34 per cent report that this is being done via super apps – a far cry from the mere 6 per cent in the UK.

Helen McRae, CEO of Mindshare Asia Pacific, says: "Consumers in Asia see more connectivity. They can socialise, purchase, and be entertained all in one ecosystem. WeChat is probably the best example, where you can chat with friends, order a taxi, shop for clothes, transfer money, order a takeaway and watch programmes, all within a single environment."

The emergence of super apps is challenging marketers to be more connected and more consumer-centric. This new level of connectivity and flexibility is built into Asian platforms such as TikTok from the start. Many brands are advanced in creating the right digital ecosystem, but this ecosystem looks different to that in other regions and companies must embrace transformation and review legacy practices to deliver on growth strategies.

"Mega days like Singles' Day in China are where ecommerce comes to life with big sales, but alongside these events there is live streaming, influencers taking the stage to talk about products and a more all-encompassing push is playing out," says McRae. "It is not only just about the sale but everything that goes around it."

GDP in southeast Asia is projected to grow at just over 5 per cent for 2022 and 2023, including China at 4.25 per cent and India at 7.9 per cent. This exceeds predictions for the US and EU, which lag at around 2 per cent, according to Euromonitor and the IMF.



“Consumers in Asia can socialise, purchase, and be entertained all in one ecosystem.”

McRae says: “Brands should be using this opportunity to build digital ecosystems that look different to the ones that exist in other regions. The world is not one size and the levers of growth are shifting in Asia and elsewhere.”

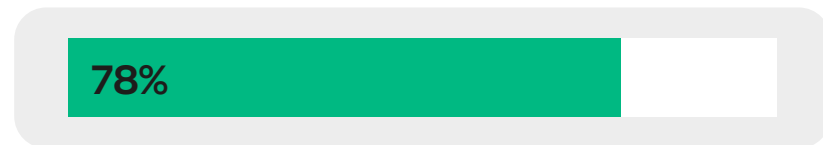
With such fast-moving economies and consumers, brands mustn't sit still and should instead think laterally about data and data signals. Mindshare used traffic data flow feeds to help clients in China pinpoint opportunities and see where growth was returning. With Louis Vuitton, it was boosting live streaming attendance at shows with data insights from consumers around a pent-up desire for travel, including taking over one of China's hot vacation spots for the show.

A recent study by Mindshare called The Geography of Purpose also revealed that only 5 per cent of consumers in Vietnam assume brands are never trying to be genuine, compared to 48 per cent in Japan, showing that while all consumers are demanding more from brands, there are differences across cultures. Brands need to ensure that trust and purpose are connected to the local landscape and what consumers locally value.

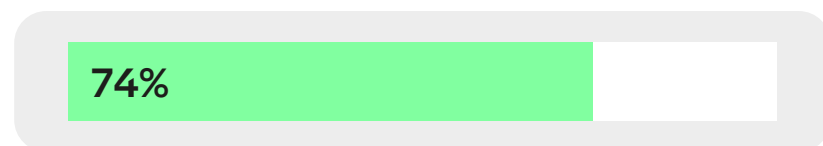
An example of this is Lifebuoy in Indonesia. In place of discounts, the brand offered consumers a free doctor consult session for every pack bought. This approach not only built trust in the brand but also addressed a need in the country where healthcare is not accessible to all.

## Ecommerce penetration is broadly similar across European and Asian markets

Ecommerce penetration across Asia



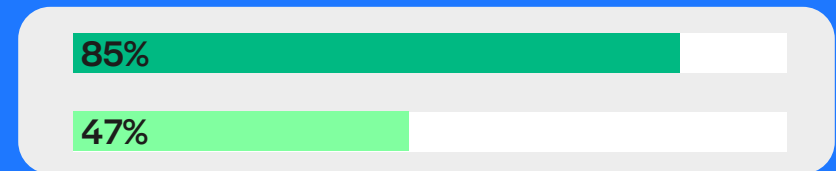
Ecommerce penetration across Europe



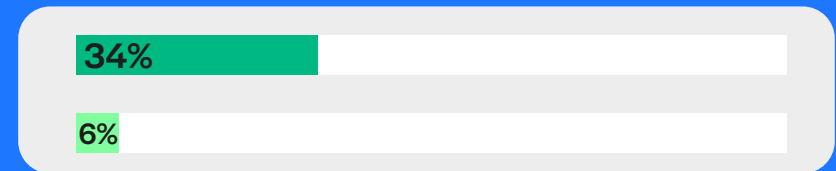
## APAC consumers are prone to embracing new ecommerce platforms (online consumer habits by region)

■ APAC ■ Europe

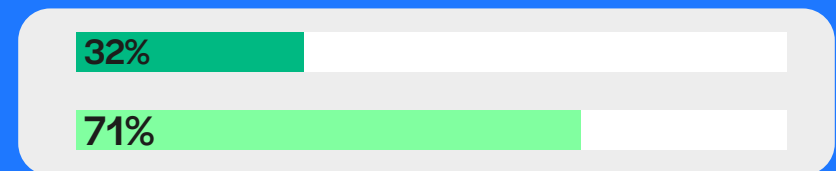
Using mobile for online shopping



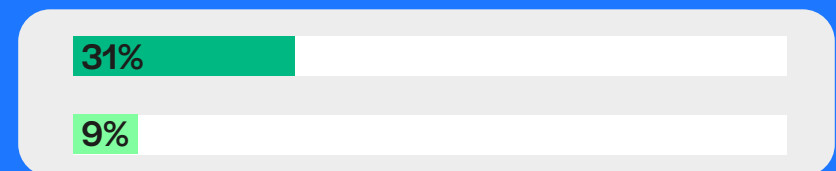
Shopping via super apps



Shopping via retailer platforms



Shopping via social media



# Growth starts with reduction

Tom Johnson, Mindshare's global chief solutions officer, spearheads the creation of solutions to help clients drive "good growth" and digital maturity. He works alongside clients with a focus on organisational design, operating models, infrastructure, consumer strategy, automation, and commerce.

"The first point is that growth often starts with reduction, certainly if it is to be 'good'" says Johnson. He argues that many big companies already have all the technology they need and are somewhat bloated as through the last few years of hyper growth in ecommerce it has been easy to justify investment in this space.

There is now a need to take a step back and evaluate what is required and what is getting in the way. For Johnson, the strategy is clear. It's about identifying "pockets of overreliance or underuse or things that are not being done well, extracting those and using them to double down on the things that will drive future growth."

It's why the first thing Mindshare often does with a new client is a maturity audit to identify where it can highlight the opportunities, as opposed to just

deploying some media. "We all talk about digital as the present and future, but there are still incredible silos within marketing to address, they largely exist because growth and legacy have had to co-exist. Integration is critical and you must remove those silos if you want to succeed," says Johnson.

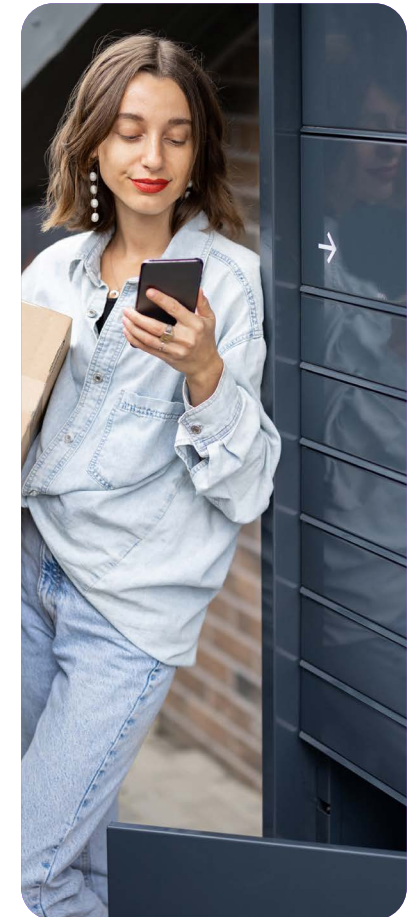
Companies on a marketing transformation journey all too often try to be excellent at one or two things in a silo, like search marketing, and so miss the bigger picture, or they try to do it all at once and fail. But the digital ecosystem is now so competitive you have to build incrementally, adding small changes up and ensuring it all stays connected. "Integration now matters as much as individual performance," says Johnson.

Measurement must also be connected. Success is all too often determined by measuring media output alone but there is often a blind spot when it comes to factoring in all the things that sit behind the output, whether it's the technology, cost of the people, delivery network, or product itself. "We believe it's good for businesses to factor all this in, whether directly applied or just

acknowledged and as we move to a digital first economy, this becomes crucial," says Johnson.

It is not about a desire to eke out one more sale, but engaging with the entire ecosystem to understand consumers more intimately, creating lifetime value and in that journey, focusing on finding the small things that can add up, this means looking as much at what you don't need, as what you want to add.

"This is why we try and balance the 'good' with 'growth'," says Gerhart. "It isn't just a messaging approach, it's about embodying what is good for the consumer, what is sustainable growth for a brand and what delivers good growth for all."



*“Good Growth is about embodying what is good for the consumer and what is sustainable growth for the brand”*

Adam Gerhart, Global CEO Mindshare





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