

The future of...Mental wellness

By  Ryan McFadyen

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In my first article of 2022, [Accessing the Youth Market](#), one of the major trends I referenced was a growing focus on wellness and mindfulness within culture.



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One of the significant drivers of this is a global macro-trend first highlighted in 2014 – VUCA. Standing for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity, VUCA itself was significantly impacted by the emergence and staying power of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

In much the same way as the pandemic accelerated the digital revolution, so it enhanced the impact of a VUCA world on our mental wellness as a population.

Brands addressing mental wellness issues

To address this large impact on our collective wellness, we've seen all aspects of society look to find solutions to address the mental wellness issues people are facing. Brands and businesses have been among the first to embrace the need ... and look to how they can drive business growth within the current climate.

Luxury brands especially are launching products and offerings which look to provide mental and emotional upliftment. According to Wunderman Thompson, “Estee Lauder launched a new luxury fragrance range developed to evoke a range of positive feelings. Catering to consumers from different locations around the world, the eight variations were crafted using neurosensory studies on the emotional effects of each fragrance, which were found to evoke feelings such as ‘positivity and joy’ or ‘calm and happiness’.”

Other brands are looking to transport consumers back to a time when things were simpler. One of the ways they are doing this is to embrace analogue technologies and retro-retail. Sales of the humble cassette player and vinyl records have seen record growth figures, and continue to accelerate into 2022. The movement is linked to both consumers need to unplug from digital formats and the mental escape provided by immersing themselves in the experience of analogue sound.

Retro-retail experiences

Retro-retail on the other hand brings a sense of playfulness to the retail experience. Embraced by brands such as Supreme and Fragment Design legend, Hiroshi Fujiwara, the retro-retail experience is allowing consumers to immerse themselves in fond memories of the past and a time when the world seemed a safer place.

The medical community, too, is looking for innovative ways to address the mental health wellness trend. Doctors and therapists are prescribing video games and virtual reality to treat conditions such as ADHD and PTSD, while seeking to address depression and feelings of loneliness.

For example, EndeavourRX is the first-ever clinically-proven and FDA-approved video game used for the treatment of ADHD in children between the ages of 8 and 12. According to the company’s website, 73% of children reported an improvement in their attention and 68% of parents said they saw improvements in their children’s ADHD impairments after two months’ treatment.



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Retailers and pharmacies are expanding their offering into mental wellness with brands such as CVS Health, Walgreens and Walmart providing access to mental health wellness solutions including access to licensed therapists therein aligning counselling services with more traditional medical treatments.

Governments, developers and companies are utilising their spaces as public spaces for mental health and wellness are popping up. Spaces are being redesigned to cater for mental wellness and microforests are being planted within city centres and office complexes to provide a space for people to decelerate and escape the manic energy of the city by stepping back into nature.

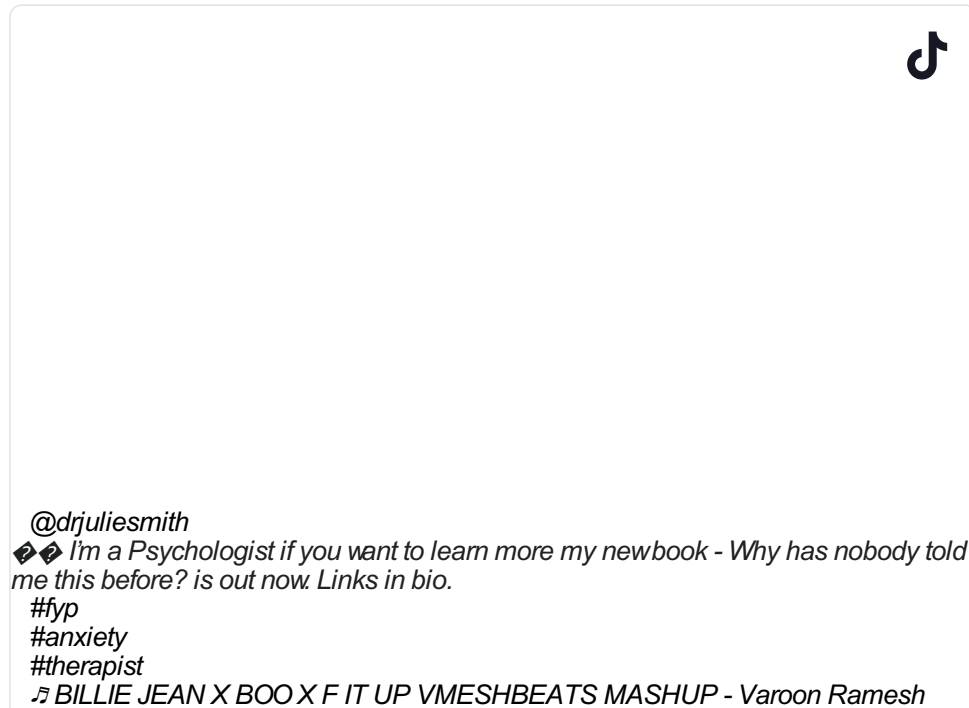
Social media and mental wellness

Not to be forgotten, social media is also driving the trend. According to Wunderman Thompson, in early December 2021, the TikTok hashtag #mentalhealth had 21.6 billion views, #therapy had 5.3 billion views, #therapytiktok had 447.5-million views, and #therapistsoftiktok had 357.6 million views.

Looking to speak directly to Gen Z, whom many studies claim is the most stressed-out generation currently, mental health therapists are talking to TikTok to provide guidance to this anxious generation in the space they most frequent. Using short entertaining videos featuring pop music, the therapists provide soothing exercises and coping mechanisms while answering questions attracting millions of followers and views.

A good example is Dr Julie Smith, who has a doctorate in clinical psychology and owns a private practice in Hampshire, England. She posts introductory, educational mental health content on TikTok covering topics such as early signs of burnout. Smith's mission is to help as many people as she possibly can to thrive.

Some of her videos include 'Tips from Therapy' and 'Things People learn in Therapy'. She also has a post on 'How to master your own mind', which is all about using mindfulness to your advantage. These tools can help you become more aware of your emotions and actions and cope with stress. To date, she has 3.1 million followers and 35.8 million likes.



In summary, the business of mindfulness and mental health has skyrocketed since 2020 and continues to gain momentum into 2022. For brands, business leaders and marketers, this not only provides an opportunity for business growth or innovation but a responsibility to those within our sphere of influence to provide responsible interventions that will truly make an impact while staying relevant and authentic to yourself, your brand or your business purpose.

ABOUT RYAN MCFADYEN

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