

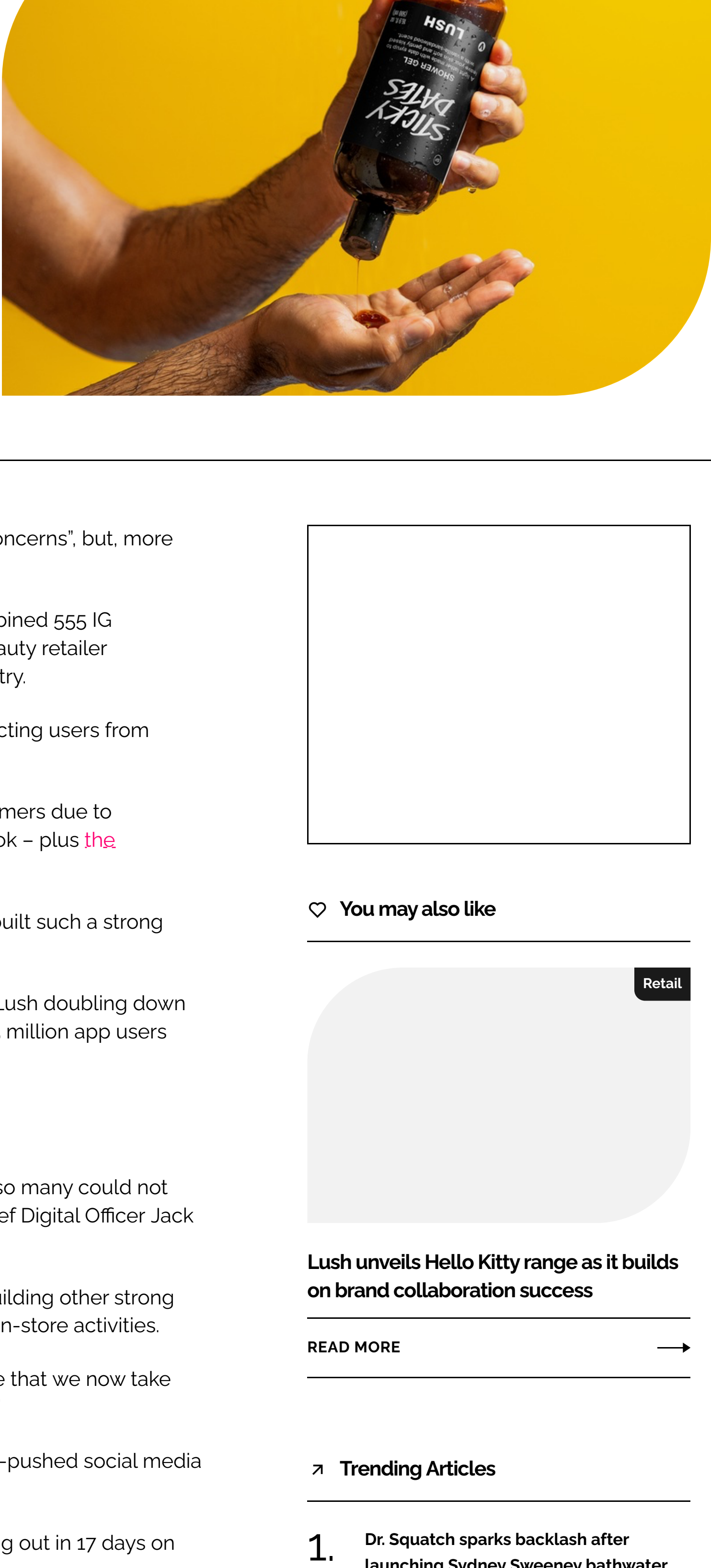
The impact of Lush's anti-social media strategy three years on

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By Amanda May | Published: 22-Jan-2025

Marketing Digital

Chief Digital Officer Jack Constantine on the effects of the retailer's social media hiatus, driving growth through other channels and his views on the discord surrounding platform moderator issues



It feels like only yesterday that [Lush](#) quit social media for good over "safety concerns", but, more than three years on, we ask: was it the right decision for the business?

Despite having more than eight million followers on Instagram (across a combined 555 IG accounts) and three million Facebook followers (across 517 accounts), the beauty retailer suspended all its profiles in November 2021 in a move that shocked the industry.

Lush said it would stick to this hiatus until these sites "do a better job of protecting users from harmful content", and the company has been true to its word ever since.

Now, with a growing undermining of faith in social media among some consumers due to Facebook moderator issues, and the ongoing banning and unbanning of TikTok – plus [the uncertainty of the platform's future owner](#) – was Lush on to something?

When Lush left social media, it felt like a risky move for the retailer who had built such a strong presence among communities on those platforms.

But its anti-social media strategy seems to have not harmed its growth, with Lush doubling down on its company-owned digital communication methods instead, securing 1.75 million app users and three million opted-in users to its newsletter globally.

Breaking the mould

"When we first left, everyone's opinion about social media was very positive, so many could not understand how, or why, we thought there was a negative side to it," Lush Chief Digital Officer Jack Constantine told *Cosmetics Business*.

"But we have done a good job of making sure customers can access us by building other strong communication tools that are not social media, like our newsletters, app and in-store activities.

"Leaving [social media] has had a positive impact on the business in the sense that we now take more thought into how we approach our communication with our customers."

And this is reflected in the business's strong digital sales despite no company-pushed social media presence.

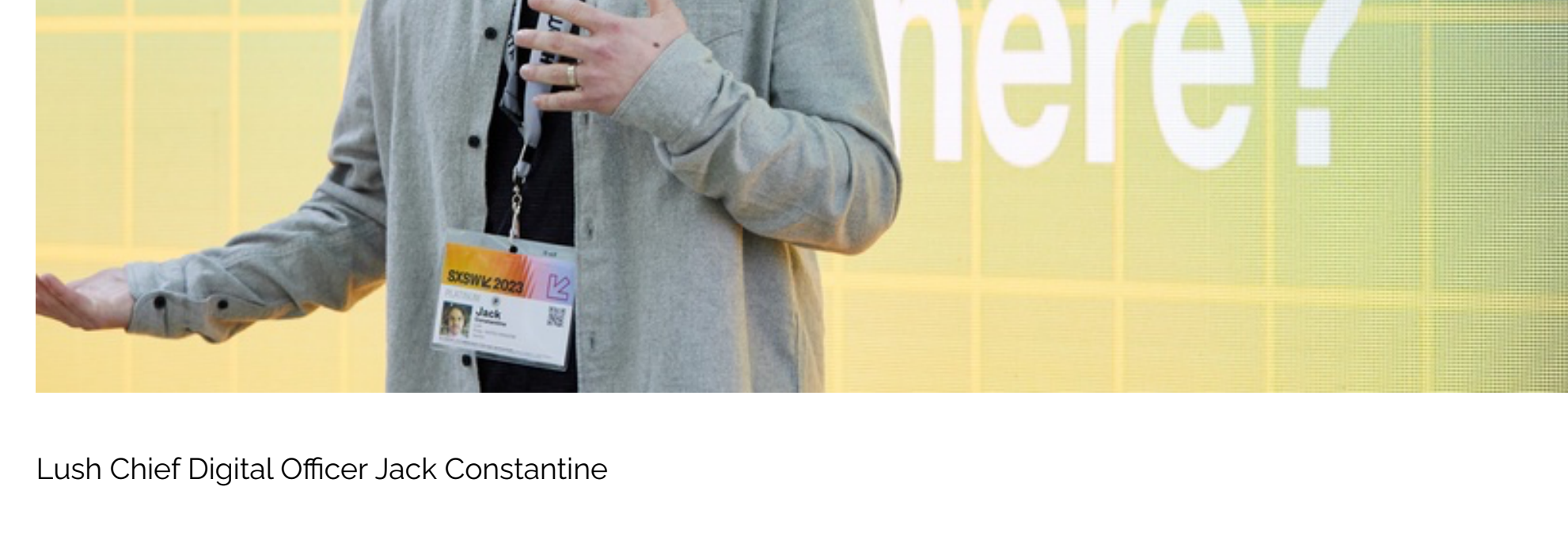
Saltbomb bath bomb, which debuted in February 2024, is one example, selling out in 17 days on Lush's website.

It created a product tapped into the hype surrounding the movie *Saltburn* in the cultural zeitgeist, with the brand having sold 60% of the bath bomb stock within the first week.

Saltbomb also made up 28% of Lush's UK digital bath bomb sales during its launch week, with the brand selling an average of 347 per day, equating to 14 per hour.

But how sustainable is this model when social selling, in general, is on the up?

Constantine reveals the strengths and challenges of Lush's anti-social media strategy and why he thinks 2025 is shaping up to be the most unpredictable year yet for the social media landscape in the Q&A below.



Lush Chief Digital Officer Jack Constantine

There seems to be some growing undermining faith among consumers in social media due to the ongoing moderator issues, do you think this feeling will last?

Constantine: I think we are getting to the truth about what is really driving these big organisations and coming to the end of the reign of the tyrannical social media giants.

The discord is already rumbling and people are looking at social media alternatives like RedNote and Bluesky, so, in a way, we are probably going to get a more democratised view on platforms and tools that people can use to socially connect.

The one I believe in the most is probably the hardest to achieve – if we get to a state of Web3 and blockchain technology where users own their data and which bypasses so many elements of what is currently at play around the way that the platforms are controlled by these giants.

This really started when X (previously named Twitter) was bought by [US billionaire] [Elon Musk](#). He unraveled what was a platform for people and orchestrated it to be a platform for what he wanted to achieve.

Then you have the whole thing with [Facebook founder] Mark Zuckerberg and Meta, and the origins of it from his perspective of what he was trying to do in terms of gathering data and information.

It is so publicly visible and the motivation is, like, undeniable – he is clearly wanting to get in the good books of leadership and it is like he cares more about that than any user.

It does not feel like there is energy being put into protecting the user, there is more interest [by these companies] in how I make sure my business is going to be seen in the right light by the leadership.

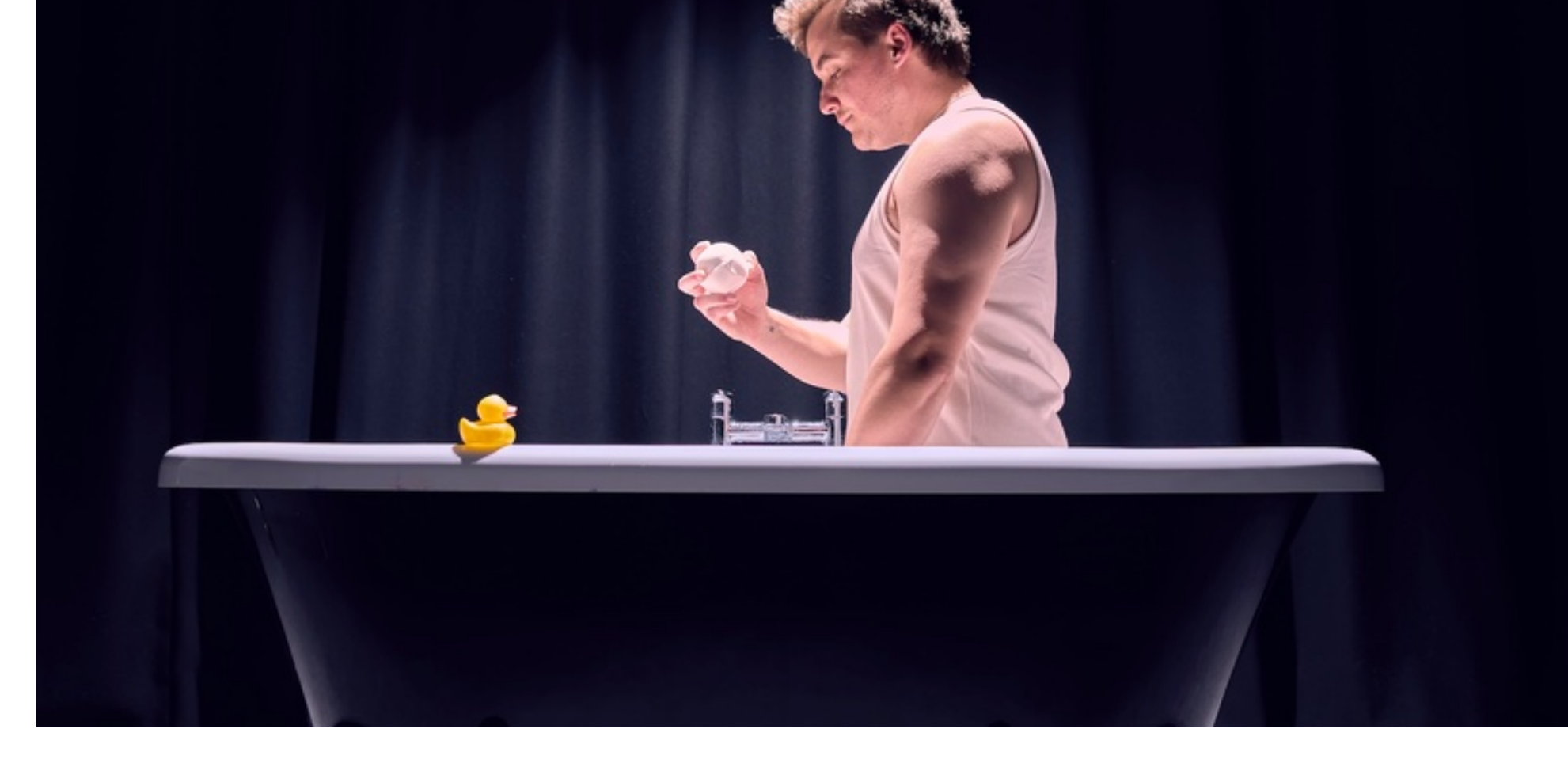
Before, maybe it was more ambiguous.

What is your advice for beauty brands during this potential discord who have thriving social communities?

Find ways to manage and elevate your 'owned' platforms more, looking at your website, app and tools, because, ultimately, it is the one thing you can control.

And that is the biggest thing we have learned because it is the way you can guarantee the best experience for your customers.

It is always going to be difficult when you are on borrowed platforms because you cannot predict what they are going to do.



Lush's Saltbomb bath bomb

How has leaving social media truly impacted Lush's business over the past three years?

In terms of financial, we were never heavily in paid social media spend, so it has not really had an impact budget-wise.

Instead, we have had to look at more creative ways to tell our brand stories via better share functions from our website, newsletters, and working with partners in different fields and industries to expand our audience.

Things like [brand collaborations](#) [from *Super Mario* to *Barbie*] have been a huge success for us and working with these big partners has brought about more visibility for the brand.

Our app is also an area we have been investing in and that we see the best return on.

We have the most engaged customers [on there] and we have had a really big uptick on push notifications – people turning that feature on because they want to hear from us.

We are working on new features like customers being able to hear directly from their favourite store, improving the relationship between the customer and shop at that local level.

There is probably still a majority feeling that it is less convenient that we are not on social media, but I think the debate is much more balanced now, and worth-of-mouth through all channels is still huge for us [in-person, digital, print].

For example, we still do not understand how our new Shampoo Bar is a bestseller in mainland China when we do not have shops or a brand presence there [because we will not have Lush products tested on animals].

Yet, we have customers coming into our shops to buy massive amounts of the new bar to get it into mainland China.

It has gone viral in that country, with people understanding that it is good for helping with hair growth, but it is like, how did you learn that?

Despite not being on TikTok or Instagram, product launches from the brand have continued to go viral on these platforms via user-generated content (UGC). What are your thoughts on this?

Not being present ourselves [on social media] has not stopped word-of-mouth moments – customers talk about a Lush item they love on whatever platforms they are choosing to post on, which then creates a massive buzz around our products.

But when it is an authentic piece of UGC, it feels legit and people respond well to it, and that kind of word-of-mouth has always been great for us.

Lush's Sticky Dates shower gel is an example of this, becoming the brand's third best-selling product in the UK & Ireland in 2024 [after having gone viral on TikTok after a creator featured it in their UGC shower routine video].



Lush's full Sticky Dates range

Have any of the big tech giants reached out to you during your social media hiatus?

They have not approached us in any way. We have talked about approaching different platforms and looked at conversations, but we have normally instigated that.

None of them have reached out to us and gone, 'we would love to improve. How can we do a better job for you?'

No, they are quite happy taking everyone's money.

Would Lush ever return to social media?

There are quite a few layers I would need to see from these organisations to feel competent to go back on there.

Stricter would need to be a major review and clear policies on content management, and much stricter guidelines and rules on how these companies manage their algorithms for harmful content.

A lot would need to be put in place to demonstrate that they are prioritising the safety of the user.

But it is probably a utopian view – if everyone could own the data and they could have conversations without middlemen who are controlling algorithms and generally manipulating things for their own game.

Read more:

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- [Is this beauty's greenest space? Inside Lush's new Green Hub](#)
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