

## **Interview with Steven Bartlett**

### **You have insight into the social media activities of millions of young people. What topics are the Millennials currently focusing on?**

*Mental health is the biggest talking point among millennials right now. My inbox is inundated with people who are concerned about anxiety, depression, toxic relationships and mental health in general. The next question is how much of a role does social play in causing mental health issues. It's a difficult subject and one that's down to individuals. A lot of good has come from social, but at the same time you can't hide from the fact that using Instagram too much can make you self-obsessed, hence why we're seeing Likes and follower counts disappear. Aside from this, it's the environment. If it's not Extinction Rebellion, it's podcasts about sustainable fashion. Millennials are feeling the burden of saving the planet. Maybe it's because they were dealt a bad hand from years of debt and overspending; maybe they just believe in the power of change more than previous generations. It's an interesting time.*

### **Which brands are currently particularly successful in social media with young people and why?**

*The brands that have found success recently are those that are prepared to stand up and put profit to the side to do social good. Nike springs to mind, but they always will following ads like the one with Colin Kaepernick. They got a lot of hate off the back of that post, but no one can question that it was from a place of authenticity. Social Chain recently tackled mental health head-on with a Veet Men campaign that featured footballers and rugby players talking about their career highs and lows. What made the campaign so engaging was how candid and real it was. Nowadays authenticity is as important as emotion - you can't have one without the other. Any brand, on its day, can make an impact on social, but how many are prepared to make a challenging and ambitious piece of work that doesn't have an obvious sales objective attached to it?*

### **What do you think: How will social media channels develop in the medium term - and will there still be Facebook, YouTube & Co. in ten years' time?**

*Social platforms like Facebook and YouTube aren't going anywhere. They will continue to integrate into every aspect of our lives in the medium term, be that through wearable tech or shopping. You don't have to use Facebook to be part of the ecosystem; just being on WhatsApp or Messenger is enough. Messaging platforms, in particular, are going to be the*

*main focus of social, and brands need to prepare for this seismic shift. That means using chatbots to communicate and serve audiences and finding innovative ways to interact that aren't just customer service-based. I'm interested to see what part regulation plays for these platforms. The rift between platforms and governments is widening, and somewhere along the line there will have to be a compromise. Whether that's encryption or treating platforms like publishers is yet to be seen.*

### **Can you personally imagine a break from the digital world and live without twitter, youtube, instagram, facebook etc?**

*Yes I can definitely imagine this. I cannot emphasize enough how vital I believe it is to only follow people on social media who promote a positive influence on you and your life, people who you can learn from and people who will make you into a better person. Too many people lose track of what's fake and what's real across social, specifically on Instagram, and so from this perspective I believe a break could really do people some good.*

### **What do you think: Will social media channels largely replace traditional marketing channels?**

*You can argue with any graph, but the evidence is there that young people are watching less traditional television and consuming content through digital means. That's not just social; it extends to podcasts and Netflix. I don't think traditional marketers want to admit that media is changing, but it is. You can either change with it or do what you've always done in the hope you will remain relevant. You won't. I think both channels can co-exist, but we're nearing a point where one is now light years ahead of the other. Another reason for that is data. More consumer data is shared in a single minute than used to be obtained in a year, so where do you expect brands to put their money and resources?*

### **What should a Marketeer in social media NOT do? What does he have to do to be successful?**

*What you should and shouldn't do is subjective. What's worked for Social Chain is not being romantic about any one platform or service. We've always been agile and sensitive to change because that's the only way to stay first. We go where the attention is because the minute Facebook and Instagram take priority over our audience or our clients' audiences,*

*we've lost them. That's why we moved into podcasting and data and why we will continue to explore emerging areas in media.*

### **What is your advice for companies: How much do companies have to invest in social media?**

*In monetary terms, there's no set answer. You need to invest as much as makes sense to do so. You can't put everything into one pot. Experiment, break, innovate. I think marketers need to look at their mix to test where they are seeing value. One thing's for sure, the cost of social is going up, with organic reach in sharp decline. A brand may look at that and say, we better look elsewhere. An agency like ours will find a way to make these platforms work for us, so that we can reach more people for less. It depends on your objectives.*

### **How do you see the development: from social media to social commerce?**

*Social platforms are positioning social commerce as a more seamless experience where the journey to purchase can be done in three clicks, not nine. This is therefore a positive for brands because it has the potential to capitalise on spontaneous purchases. Soon or later, many of us will be making purchases through Instagram Shopping, which recently launched Checkout as a digital store, and buying plane tickets through WhatsApp. Combining this with a chatbot and you see the potential. Facebook and Instagram are ahead with social commerce more than any platform, but Snapchat has made in-ways too. It opens up a new avenue: creator commerce, whereby users can buy direct from their favourite influencers.*