

Data and Analytics Have Helped Peace Out Skincare Pivot During the Pandemic

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Since its launch in 2017, Peace Out Skincare—known for its Acne Dot patches—has been rapidly expanding its business through an exclusive partnership with Sephora, as well as its own direct-to-consumer (D2C) business.

This year, however, the company had to reevaluate how it operates and markets to consumers due to the pandemic. We recently spoke with Junior Pence, CMO and creative director at Peace Out Skincare, about how the company has adapted these past few months, how data and analytics is helping to inform ongoing marketing decisions, and why TikTok is becoming one of its go-to channels.

How has your business changed during the pandemic?

Our marketing has always been driven toward Sephora. We didn't even start our direct-to-consumer [D2C] ecommerce business until the end of 2018 going into 2019 because we really wanted to focus on Sephora.

When the virus hit, we needed to take another look at our marketing strategy. We didn't want to take anything away from what we were doing, but we also knew that we needed to figure out a solution for

stores closing, since physical retail was a significant part of our revenues.

We created different types of scenarios: "really, really bad," "really bad" and then just "bad." We worked off of those in terms of how we were laying out percentages: taking 50% out of the budget, 30%, 20%. Interestingly, what we started to see early on was that consumers weren't backing away from shopping, they were actually shopping more. The more money we were putting into SEO ads and affiliate marketing, the more we were driving influencer outreach, and the more consumers were coming back to us.

Did your advertising have to change?

Our advertising was always based on a really fun and energetic lifestyle. But through our analytics and data, we saw that people were no longer looking for fun keywords.

They weren't looking for "glow up" or other phrases that had normally worked for us in the past. They were looking for direct product imagery and specific ingredient and benefits. We then adjusted advertising on all of our platforms.

You mentioned seeing consumers shopping more. What other shopping behaviors have you noticed?

We saw that consumers were buying in bulk. Before, they would buy one product. Now they're buying five, and it's not just the standard box of our Acne Dots; it's the jumbo size. We saw that we were getting a lot of return and repeat customers as they continued to stay at home. It was what we've been calling the "toilet paper effect," where people started hoarding skincare. Instead of buying one and then waiting until it runs out, they're now buying in multiples—in case something happens to the manufacturing or distribution, or there's a shutdown.

We're driving more money into marketing, and we're focusing on the analytics that we're seeing on a day-to-day basis. If we see something spike, we look at where it came from. Whether it's a press hit, a YouTube video, or a social media mention or post, every day we're putting a little bit more money into different areas and situations.

The analytics that we're getting back are pretty wild. Right now we're studying demographics and learning that our consumer who is purchasing online is a different consumer from the one who is shopping at Sephora locations.

Have you been leaning on any channels more than usual?

Yes, we have definitely increased our social media presence. We do a lot more on Instagram now in terms of posting Stories. We don't really do Instagram Live, because it's hard to go live with our product since you have to wear an Acne Dot for 6 hours. And our Pore Strips are usually worn for 4 to 6 hours.

A platform that we like to use for videos is TikTok. In fact, we recently went heavy into the app and hired a TikTok agency to work with us on creating ads and collaborating with influencers. We're working with TikTok directly now as well. One of the most important and effective things we did [amid the pandemic] was prioritize and supercharge all the initiatives and marketing plans that we were going to be doing in Q3 and Q4.

One of your campaigns just recently ran on TikTok. What was engagement like?

Influencer Kaelyn White filmed a before and after video highlighting the product. Then, influencer Hiram [@skincarebyhyram] created an organic duet video with Kaelyn.

The duet video has been viewed more than 12 million times and loved 2.7 million times. Before the video was posted, we had 1,350 followers. Now we have 20,000. The video is lifting sales, too. We recently sold nearly 10,000 units of Pores Strips, which generated \$167,000 in sales.

Right now, we're ramping up marketing efforts on this channel by exploring campaigns, doubling down on influencer relations, and diverting budgets from other platforms like Instagram.

Have your plans for the remainder of the year changed in any way?

Nothing's changed; everything is full speed ahead. We're launching a new product [this month]. And we're still on target to launch in Sephora locations in Australia and New Zealand as well. However, we won't be having an event for our new product.