

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS: SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN LEADERS

Over the past year, new digital technologies accelerated and reshaped how we work and socialize. In celebration of Women's History Month, eMarketer has curated this special collection of interviews with female marketing leaders to explore digital acceleration and the changes it has brought in this new era.

March 2021



MEET THE LEADERS



Suzanne Kounkel is a principal in Deloitte Consulting LLP and the CMO of Deloitte. As the leader of Deloitte's integrated marketing and sales organization, Kounkel challenges her team to push the bounds of creativity and collaboration in pursuit of two intertwined goals: happy clients and healthy business growth. [Page 3](#)



Sonika Patel is the vice president of marketing at Danone North America, leading the transformation of brands within the yogurt portfolio. Since starting at Danone, Patel has helped build brand love through innovative and fresh marketing techniques to elevate the relevance of Danone yogurts in today's food and grocery landscape. [Page 4](#)



Elizabeth Stein is the founder and CEO of Purely Elizabeth. In 2009, when Purely Elizabeth's first product line was introduced, the goal was simple: Stein wanted to provide healthier, better-tasting alternatives to what was currently on the food market. Purely Elizabeth's mission is to inspire people to live healthier lives and thrive on their wellness journey. [Page 5](#)



Kathy Hines is the vice president of global marketing at Dickies, leading the transformative growth of a 100-year-old workwear and lifestyle brand. Since starting at Dickies just two years ago, Hines has honed the brand's purpose and values, combined regional markets into a single global brand, and elevated Dickies' relevance to new and existing customers. [Page 8](#)



Nell Shapiro is the co-founder and CEO of Kibou, a diaper bag brand. After two years of nights and weekends spent fully immersed in building the business, Shapiro left her 15-year career in education to commit full-time to Kibou. Following its 2019 Kickstarter launch, Kibou's first year saw tremendous growth in the "Mother & Baby" space. [Page 9](#)

DELOITTE'S SUZANNE KOUNKEL, CMO

March 1, 2021



If organizations can take away one thing from the challenges of 2020, it's the importance of "brandstanding." Having a firm grasp on your organization's purpose translates to all levels of business activities, from product development to weighing in on issues that are controversial or sociopolitical.

We spoke with Suzanne Kounkel to hear her thoughts on how marketers are working through the pandemic. Kounkel offered insight into how brands quickly pivoted during a difficult time, and how brandstanding is led from the top down.

There were many challenges in 2020 for marketers. Can you speak to any surprise successes in what was a pretty tough year?

For me, it boiled down to three things. The resiliency of everyone was truly awe-inspiring. [Second,] the innovation that we were able to do at a crazy speed was very surprising in a very positive way. And then the third is kindness—the kindness of people to each other and the amplification of that is really important.

Interestingly enough, we did do some research on this, and 58% of the 2,500 consumers we spoke with did say that they noticed the brands that were able to innovate and react with speed during [the pandemic]. And 82% of those consumers would reward that behavior over a longer-term period.

Something else that came up in 2020 and is becoming more important in 2021 is the concept of brandstanding. What do you think about this, and what's the best approach for marketers?

I do believe it's here to stay. In 2020, we saw in big and small ways companies that knew what their purpose was, made better decisions, and did so more quickly.

I think it's really important to recognize that it can't be isolated to marketing. You'll get it wrong if purpose is a marketing activity. You'll get it right if purpose is C-suite-led from the top. When I saw companies that had strong purpose, it showed up in their product, it showed up in their talent, it showed up in what their leaders were willing to say—both internally and externally—it showed up in HR policies.

That's why I believe that marketing can lead the conversation and really be the voice of how it shows up, but it has to be permeated throughout the organization, because it's more important what you do than what you say.

What advice do you have for other female executives?

It's interesting times for females right now. I don't know if you saw Dawn's Super Bowl ad about the chore gap, but certainly, it's a time where women are disproportionately taking on additional roles—whether it's Zoom stylist, or do-it-yourself crafter, or homework instructor, dog walker, all of those sorts of things.

It is an important time for women to really make sure that they're being kind to themselves around all of those additional expectations. Be really proud of who you are and why you're at the table. Never lose sight of that.

You have an important voice, and it's really important that you use it right now. I would also say, be bold, right? This is not a time to continue on or just go along to get along. It really is a time to put bold new solutions on the table.

Want to learn more about the history-making women that inspire Suzanne Kounkel?

[**Watch our video interview.**](#)

DANONE'S SONIKA PATEL, VP OF MARKETING, NORTH AMERICA

March 8, 2021



As the makers of Activia yogurt, Danone North America has made gut health and wellness intrinsic to its business. During the pandemic lockdowns, Danone developed campaigns designed to help consumers and support them in their wellness, as gut health affects how you feel both physically and emotionally.

We spoke with Sonika Patel to discuss the brand's plans to build a value-based community rooted in health and wellness solutions.

You've spent your career working for major players in the consumer packaged goods [CPG] space. And over the past year, CPG companies have had to adjust their marketing based on changes in consumer behaviors and preferences. How has this played a role in your marketing efforts?

We did see a lot of shifts in consumer behavior, especially at the beginning when everyone was stuck at home. Consumer preferences completely changed, and we saw how important health and wellness had started to become for our consumers. Specifically, we saw that Google searches for the term "gut health" spiked about 400% over the past five years.

We saw an opportunity in all of this because these shifts were pointing us toward something.

We also changed our marketing playbook a little bit and leaned toward providing positive experiences to support health and wellness for our community.

You mentioned in a recent interview that a key priority for Danone was adding value to people's lives. Can you share more on how the company has accomplished that, and how you measured success for an initiative like that?

We know that consumers are increasingly looking for products and brands that align with their values. Danone North America is the world's largest B Corporation, and we're proud of our mission to bring health through food to as many people as possible. Our brand also continues to live this mission as we prioritize purpose with performance.

So, a good example of that is we know that 30% to 40% of the food supply in the US goes to waste. Our Too Good brand is actually committed to reducing food waste and rescuing food that would otherwise be wasted to help those in need.

What advice can you offer female marketers who want to advance their careers?

The best advice that somebody gave me that I try to live by is to invest in yourself. For me, personally, investing in myself means working out, exercising, doing all of that which helps me unlock inner energy and inner strength. Try to focus on that and find something, whatever you like, that helps you take care of your health and unlock that superpower.

When it comes to marketing, a lot of our decisions are based on data and consumers, but every now and then, my advice is to not be afraid to go with your gut.

Want to learn more about Sonika Patel's favorite provocation to overcome moments of self-doubt? [Watch our video interview.](#)

PURELY ELIZABETH'S ELIZABETH STEIN, FOUNDER AND CEO

March 15, 2021



Natural foods brand Purely Elizabeth began as a side gig in Elizabeth Stein's kitchen in 2009, right as the US was coming out of a massive economic recession. Specializing in premium baking mixes at launch, Purely Elizabeth's early success can be attributed to a difficult climate in which consumers preferred to enjoy at-home indulgences rather than spend their money on dining out, according to Stein.

We spoke with Stein about how her fearlessness motivated Purely Elizabeth's early days, as well as the company's current marketing strategy—which has seen marketing dollars reallocated from in-store taste tests to digital discovery, including on Amazon.

You started the business with a gluten-free pancake and muffin mix. At the time, people associated the term “gluten-free” with something that tastes like cardboard. How did you market your brand to overcome that perception?

When I initially launched, it was all about getting the product into people's mouths as much as we possibly could. So, I spent many days at Whole Foods demoing the product. Not only was I in-store demoing, but I was getting into as many events as possible so that people could taste the products and change their perception.

The ways in which consumers have been shopping over the past year have changed drastically, and more people are ordering their groceries online. How has this shift in consumer behavior affected your business at Purely Elizabeth?

For so long, we were very much brick-and-mortar, and we hadn't really established our ecommerce presence. Thankfully, right before the pandemic, we had hired internally and set up ecommerce structure and the resources, not only for our website, but also for Amazon.

A big shift for us was that in-store, we were still relying on demos and point-of-sale discovery for consumers. Particularly this year, [we're] already shifting a lot of those marketing dollars to digital discovery so we can catch consumers outside of the store.

What advice do you have for other female executives?

One of my biggest mantras to live by is feeling the fear and doing it anyway. So many of us get caught up in the mindset of not being able to do something personally or professionally because we have our own insecurities, fears, whatever those might be. I think it's all about getting really clear on what you want, and then finding what those steps are to move forward, feel the fear, and go past it.

Want to hear about Elizabeth Stein's favorite book on women in leadership?

[Watch our video interview.](#)

HOW DIFFERENT GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES

This article was contributed and sponsored by [InMobi](#).



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As two women leaders at InMobi, we have had the opportunity to spend significant time working outside the US in the company's India and Dubai offices. This global experience has taught us to be receptive to trends that can emerge from anywhere and influence anyone, or any market, on a large scale.

This is particularly evident when you look at mobile video and mcommerce. Let's take a deeper dive into these two topics, as trends we are witnessing in Asia and the Middle East will likely soon emerge in the US.

Mcommerce

Ecommerce really took off in the US in 2020, especially with in-person shopping largely limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But only recently have ecommerce transactions started occurring on mobile in the US.

As of December 2020, 42% of all retail ecommerce sales in North America occurred on mobile devices, [according to eMarketer](#). In comparison, that same figure jumps to 65% for the Middle East and Africa, and to 80% in the Asia-Pacific region. Many of the most exciting movers and shakers in the mobile commerce race originated in Asia.

We think this gap will likely soon close, with mcommerce sales in North America expected to increase by close to 11% in 2021. As the pandemic accelerates mcommerce adoption in the US, expect major players across North America to start seeing the kind of growth that has already been observed throughout Asia over the past few years.

Mobile video viewing

Video streaming is already widely popular in the US, between YouTube, Disney+ , Netflix, and other platforms. But for a long time, much of this streaming happened on desktops, laptops or physical televisions, often through CTV/OTT connections.

Compare this to video streaming services across Asia, where much of this viewing was happening on mobile phones. According to the Asia Video Industry Association, total video streaming minutes on mobile grew 30% quarter-over-quarter in Q1 2020 across the four biggest Southeast Asian markets, and a [further 19% quarter-over-quarter in Q2 to reach 657 billion](#) viewers.

Over the past few years, Southeast Asia has emerged as one of the most exciting OTT markets across the globe. The lockdown has accelerated the exponential rise of OTT platforms in the region, leading many to believe that OTT is the medium of choice for entertainment. We predict that video viewing will be as mobile-centric in the West in the coming months as it is in other global markets today.

These two trends, which are dominant in Asia, will dramatically impact the North American market in the near future. The advantage and lesson for leaders is to not only be receptive to trends from outside your immediate purview, but also to plan for their inevitable future influence in your market.

How Many Times A Day Does The Average American Check Their Mobile Phone?

A: 35 **B: 50** **C: 96**

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DICKIES' KATHY HINES, VP OF GLOBAL MARKETING

March 22, 2021



Apparel and workwear brand Dickies was given an opportunity to take a deep, introspective look at its marketing approach during the pandemic. After all, Dickies' core consumer base is made up predominantly of frontline workers.

In our conversation with Dickies' Kathy Hines, she broke down the brand's "United by Inspiration, United by Dickies" campaign,

the importance of authentic messaging, and how that informs Dickies' inclusive narratives to lift up diverse communities.

A lot of apparel brands in the past year have strengthened their ecommerce and direct-to-consumer [D2C] marketing efforts. How has Dickies been communicating with consumers who still are not yet ready to go into physical retail stores?

For us, it's about taking these amazing people who represent our brand, and who create such beautiful things, and telling their stories. This moment has been about taking that storytelling and connecting it into digital environments.

We have multiple reaches across the world. Dickies can tell these very rich, video-based stories and regionalize them while also telling a consistent narrative.

Another approach that Dickies has taken in the past year was taking a stance on some controversial issues. For other marketers who may not be comfortable taking a "brand stand" just yet, how would you suggest they approach a campaign?

For us, it's always about coming back to our truth and our purpose. Our purpose is to champion the dignity of work. That's a really powerful statement. We feel very strongly that all work is dignified.

When the pandemic first hit, we realized that it was our people—frontline workers, the blue-collar workers—they were the ones who were still out there serving all of us. When the racial tensions started to rise, we wanted to make sure that we gave a message that was honest and [directly] from us.

What we've started to do is recognize that we have a platform to shine a light on underrepresented communities and those who are working and showing a dignity of work. And if we can use our platform to uplift others, hopefully, it really does help lift all boats.

As a successful female leader yourself, what is one piece of advice you've been given that's guided your career?

The first thing I will always share, that I believe, is you have to love what you do. It is really hard to be good at something if you don't enjoy it. Once you love what you do, be the best in the world at the job that you're in. So many people have their eye on that next thing, and that can take you away from being exceptional right now.

Be honest with yourself, and ask, "Am I in a culture where I can thrive?" Because if you're not in a culture that enables you to thrive, then it's going to be challenging.

And then seek out support. I think sometimes, as women, we try to do everything. Allow yourself to have support, invest a little bit more in having someone come help you with the dogs, or with the kids' routine in the morning—whatever it is that will take that little bit of pressure off. In the long run, it makes a huge difference. We don't have to do everything.

Want to learn more about Kathy Hines' must-read female empowerment books?

[Watch our video interview.](#)

KIBOU'S NELL SHAPIRO, CO-FOUNDER AND CEO

March 29, 2021



Diaper bag brand Kibou was born out of personal necessity for Nell Shapiro. After noticing a lack of hands-free diaper bag options, Shapiro, then a first-time mom, set out to design a solution. For proof of concept, Shapiro turned to market research to better understand the pain points of parents who used traditional diaper bags.

Following two years of perfecting product design and securing funding via Kickstarter, Kibou entered the “Mother & Baby” sector mere months before pandemic lockdowns. During our conversation, Shapiro shared how Kibou was able to reimagine its go-to market strategy by leaning into Facebook Groups, Pinterest, and virtual touchpoints to build brand awareness and reach its target demographic.

Right before the pandemic, you had started to dabble in some trade shows. But now without those shows and in-person events, how have you had to adjust your marketing strategy?

When we think about adjusting a marketing strategy, I think a lot of times people think about an established company that has years of data and experience. [Kibou] was about three months old when the pandemic hit, and suddenly we had to shift immediately.

Pivoting for us really meant looking at digital opportunities. We connected with organizations and brands, like Big City Moms and Bump Club & Beyond, who were shifting their models to have these virtual baby showers online.

We also joined conversations in Facebook Groups, authentically and organically as moms ourselves.

It's great to hear that there's been so much success in such a short period of time. Are you planning to incorporate any new channels into your marketing mix this year?

Absolutely. We started to dabble in Pinterest. It's a really great fit for us in terms of the demographic. It's also a great channel for us to demonstrate and show the functionality and features of our bag. And we're also excited to dip our toes into the TikTok world.

What advice do you have for other female entrepreneurs?

I had my fair share of setbacks and challenges in creating [Kibou]. And part of that was understanding the world of fashion and working with fashion designers. And then I started to understand that I didn't need to operate in the world of fashion.

What I needed to find my way into was the world of entrepreneurs. Once I found other female entrepreneurs through networking and joining other entrepreneurial groups like HeyMama and the Female Founder Collective, I found this amazing network of women.

I cannot say enough about how incredibly rewarding and supportive it has been. I'm blown away by the support and the brilliance that women offer to one another.

Want to learn more about the history-making women that inspire Nell Shapiro?

[Watch our video interview.](#)

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