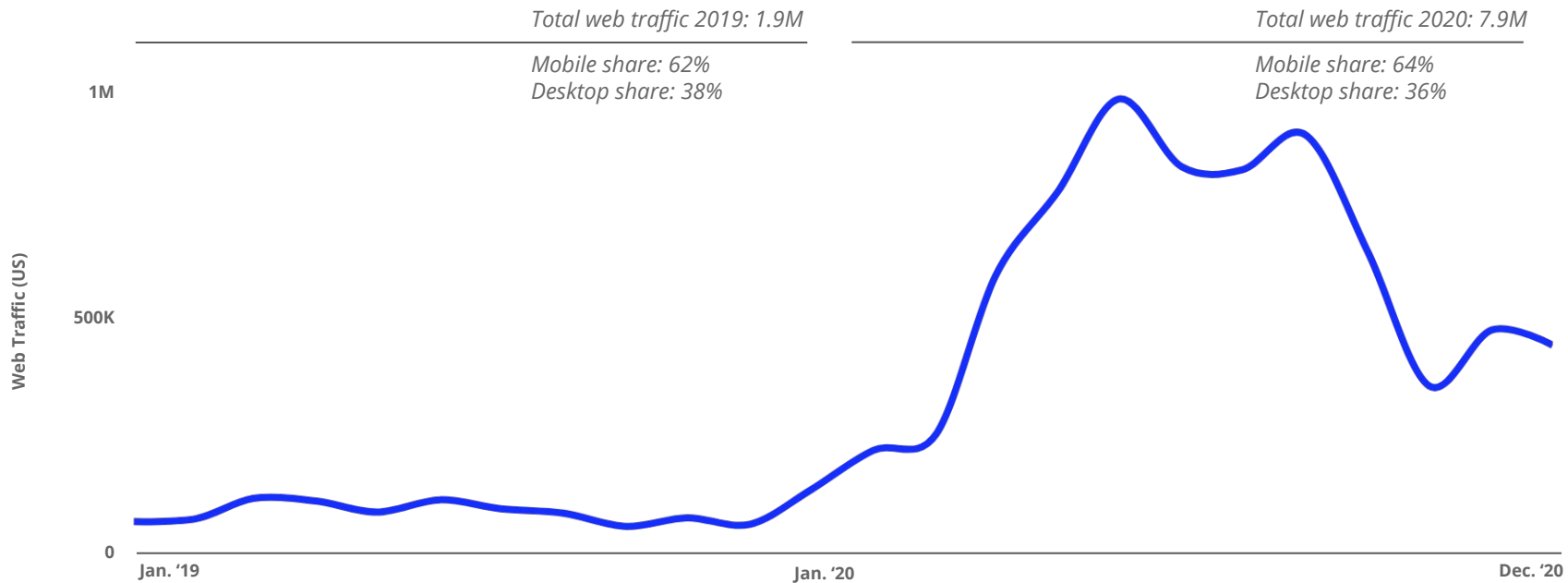




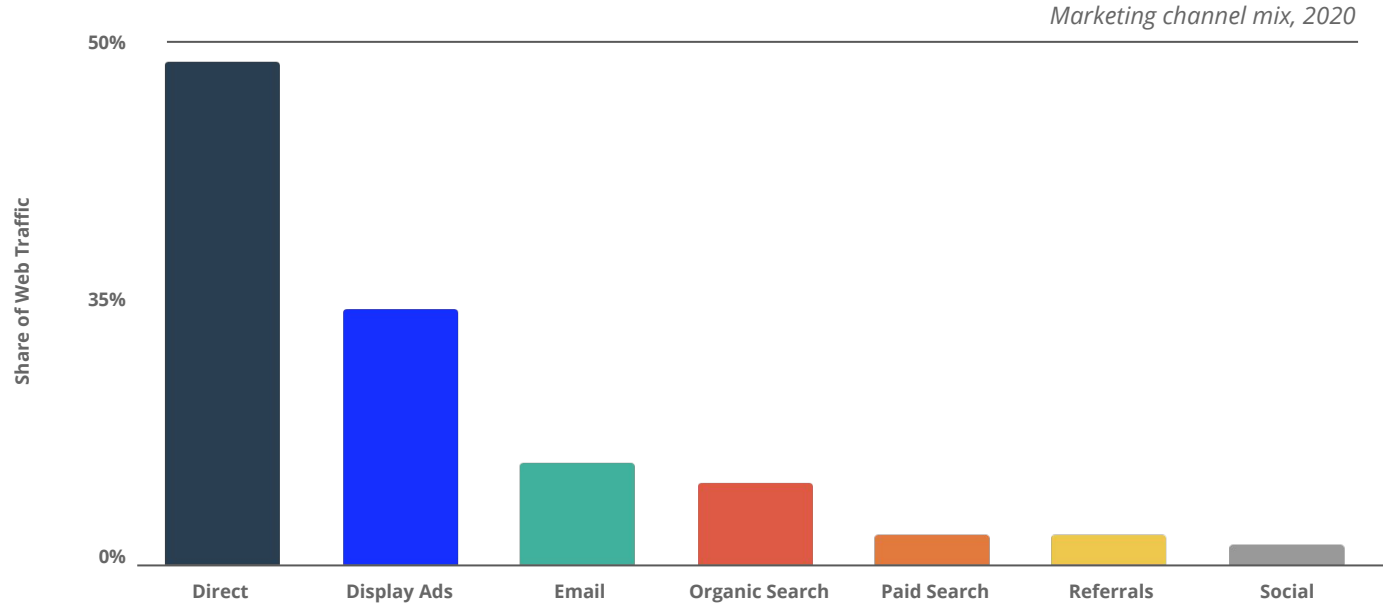
**hint®**

**Marketing Strategy to Grow  
Website Traffic by 344%  
Food and Beverage**

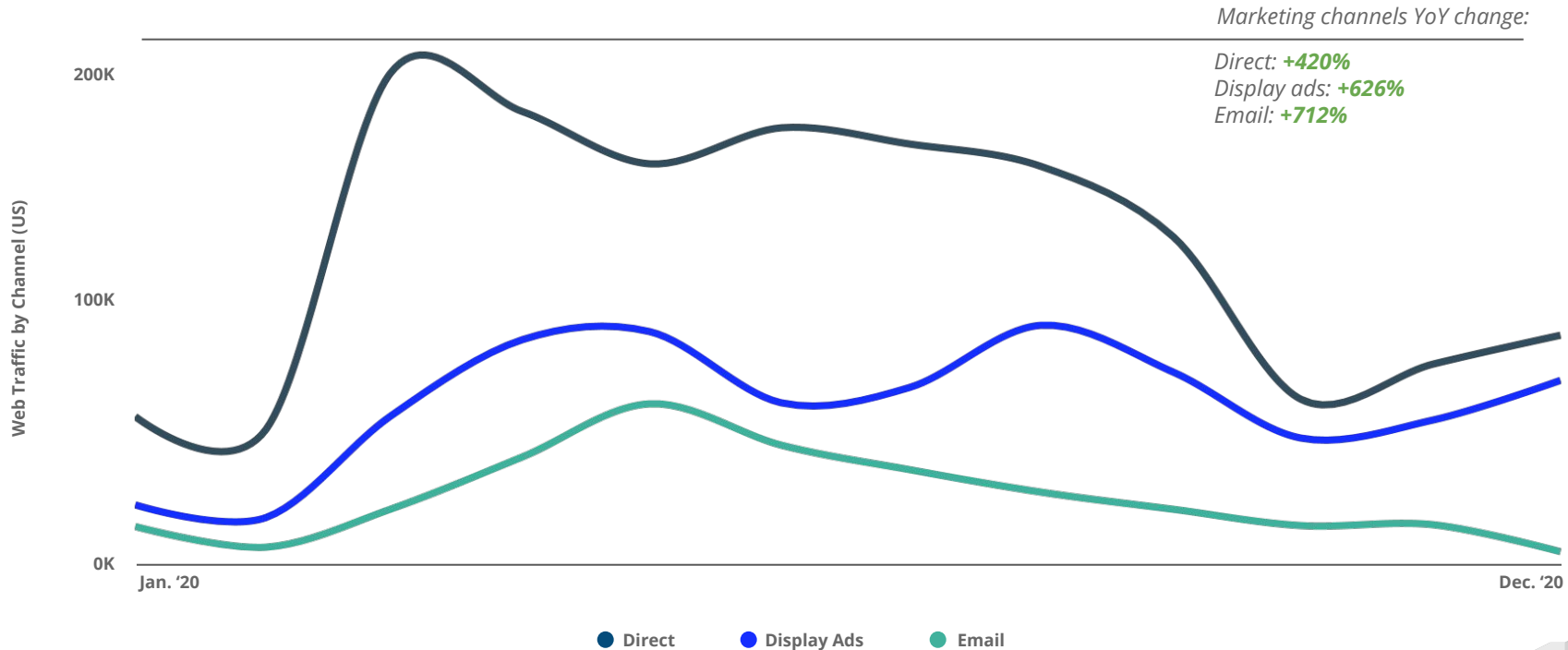
[Hint](#) has seen a **+322%** YoY increase in web traffic in 2020.



**Hint maintains a balanced mix of marketing channels, where Direct drives the highest volume of website traffic, followed by Display ads.**

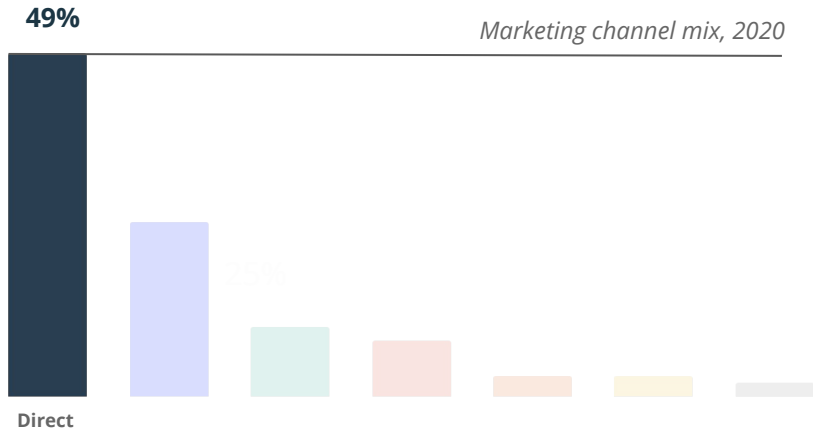


**Direct, Display ads, and Email channels have seen the highest traffic spikes in 2020 and combined drove +500% (2.4M) website visits vs. the previous year (399K).**



## Direct Traffic

[Traffic sent from users that directly entered a URL into a browser, saved bookmarks or any links from outside the browser (such as on Microsoft Word).]



Definition by SimilarWeb

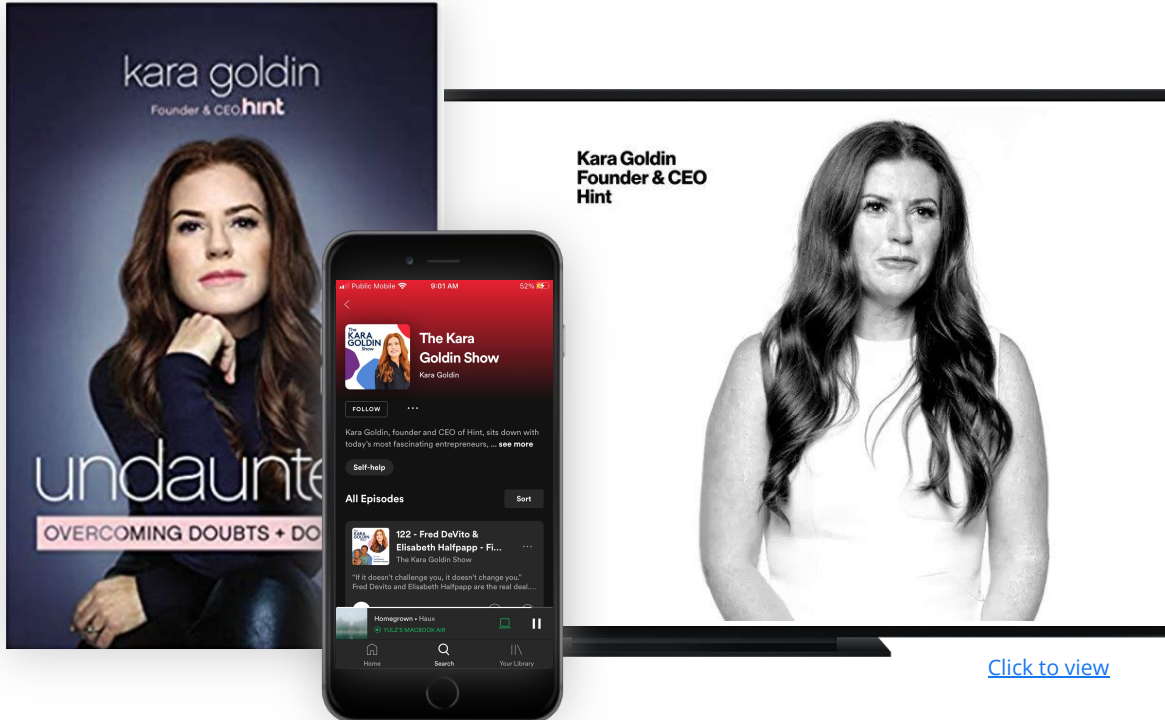
Hint, launched in 2005, built its brand awareness and loyal customer base via offline (Wholefoods, Target, Costco) and online (Amazon) retailer distribution.

The company launched its own direct-to-consumer website in 2014. By the end of 2019, 40% of Hint's sales were coming from its own direct-to-consumer website

[\(New Hope Network\)](#).

It's expected for a non-digital-born company with a large loyal customer base to have almost half of its web traffic come from the Direct channel.

**Hint's founder and CEO Kara Goldin became an influential business woman after she launched the company in 2005. Kara published a book, launched a podcast, and appeared in a Verizon TV ad. Her publicity has been helping drive Hint's brand awareness.**



## Awards and recognition

[Fortune's](#) Most Powerful Women Entrepreneurs  
[Ernst & Young's](#) Entrepreneurial Winning Women  
Gold [Stevie Award](#) Winner for Female Entrepreneur of the Year  
[Forbes'](#) 40 Women to Watch Over 40  
EY Entrepreneur of the Year, Northern California  
Fast Company's' Most Creative People in Business

[Click to view](#)

# Strong PR coverage helped Hint to establish a brand image of an innovative company that pioneered the healthy water craze.

The New York Times

The Coronavirus Outbreak > Latest Updates Maps and Tracker Unemployment Numbers Life at Home How to Help Newsletter

CORNER OFFICE

## How They Keep the Flavored Water and Veggie Burgers Coming

Larry Praeger of Dr. Praeger's Purely Sensible Foods and Kara Goldin of Hint Water have each had to navigate challenges for their companies during the pandemic.



## A former diet cola addict built a \$100m firm

By Anne Cassidy  
Business reporter

© 29 September 2019



ROBERT MEARES

Kara Goldin created the \$100m business in her kitchen

The BBC's weekly The Boss series profiles different business leaders from around the world. This week we speak to Kara Goldin, founder of US flavoured water company Hint.

## Hint ignites unsweetened, flavored water craze

Beverage brand grows from kitchen experimentation to national success



April 8, 2019

Barbara Harfmann

KEYWORDS [Flavored water](#) / [health and wellness](#) / [Hint Water](#) / [kids' drinks](#) / [women in the beverage industry](#)

[Order Reprints](#)



No Comments

Trying to give up diet soda and get healthy but growing increasingly bored with drinking plain water, hint Inc. Founder and Chief Executive Officer Kara Goldin took her "little idea" and mantra to "drink water, not sugar" and developed it into a [woman-run](#) business with more than 150 employees and \$140 million in sales, industry sources say.

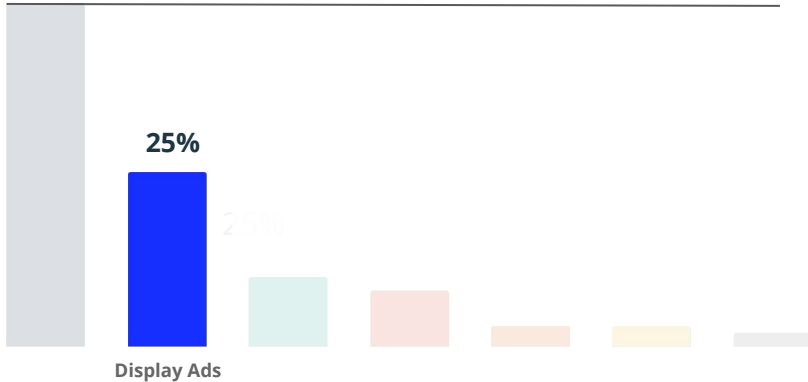
Founded in 2005, the San Francisco-based hint Inc. was born with passion and purpose, growing from Goldin's experimentation in the kitchen from adding sliced up fruits into water as a means to get healthy while also inspiring her husband and their four children then all under the age of seven, to try the healthier, better tasting waters.

The pursuit of a dream to help consumers' lead healthier lives started when Goldin realized there was a lack of healthy beverage options in her life, and on the shelves. "I was not feeling well — I was overweight, my skin looked terrible with adult acne and I had no energy. After

## Display Ads

[ Traffic sent from Display and Video ads via a known ad-serving platform (i.e. GDN, Doubleclick). ]

*Marketing channel mix, 2020*



Definition by SimilarWeb

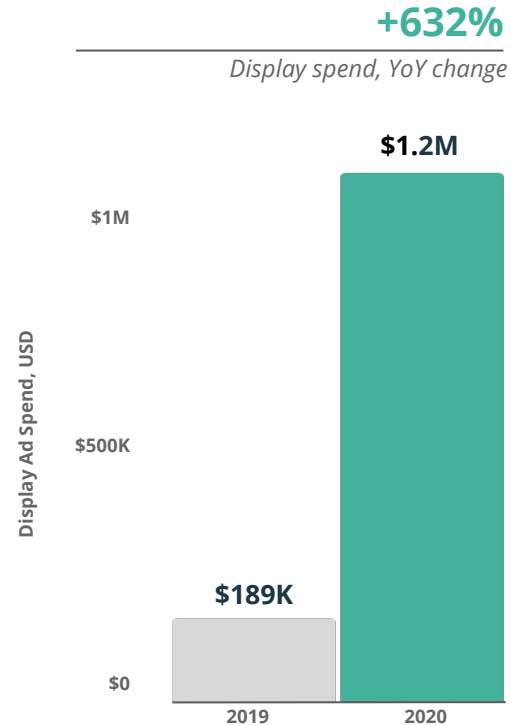
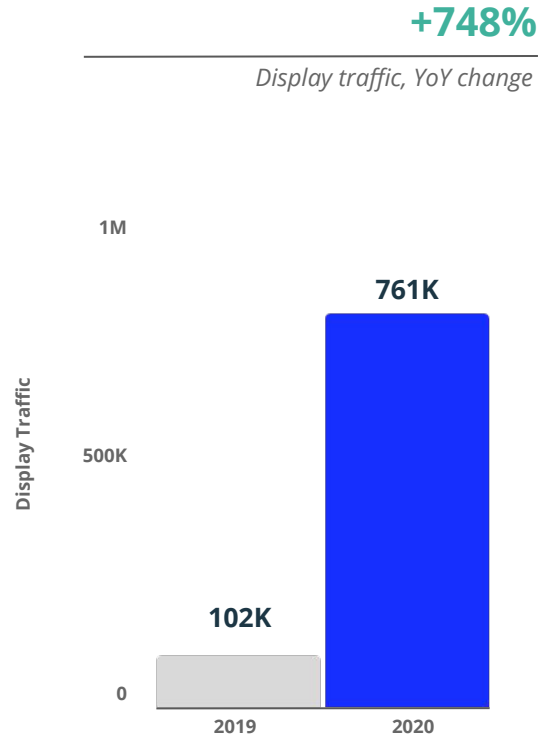
Display ads are the biggest paid traffic-generating channel for Hint Drinks.

In 2019, the Display traffic share was only 14%. The company doubled down on its Display ads investment in 2020 and saw a respective increase in this channel performance, driving its web traffic share to 25% in 2020.

Hint consistently ran Display ads throughout the year, however, the brand increased its spending during its strategic season (May-August) to maintain high ad frequency and elevate top-of-mind awareness.



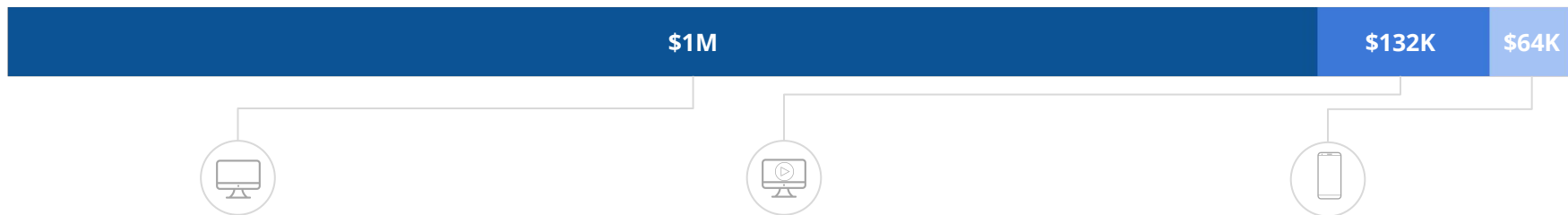
In 2020, website traffic generated by Display ads grew by **+748%**, driven by an almost equal increase in the Display advertising spend (**+632%**).



\*Spend is a directional approximation and does not include retargeting or behavioural targeting.

**84% of Hint's Display ads were invested into the desktop banners, the rest was split between mobile display (11%) and Amazon video (5%).**

Display ad budget distribution, USD



### Desktop Display

82% of the display ads impressions came from yahoo.com\*, which received 72% of all display ads budget.

\*yahoo.com  
finance.yahoo.com  
news.yahoo.com

yahoo.com/health  
sports.yahoo.com  
att.yahoo.com

### Desktop Video

In 2020, Hint invested its video display budget into Amazon. Product-focused videos, backed up by the \$132K budget were running on amazon.com and its partners' network\*.

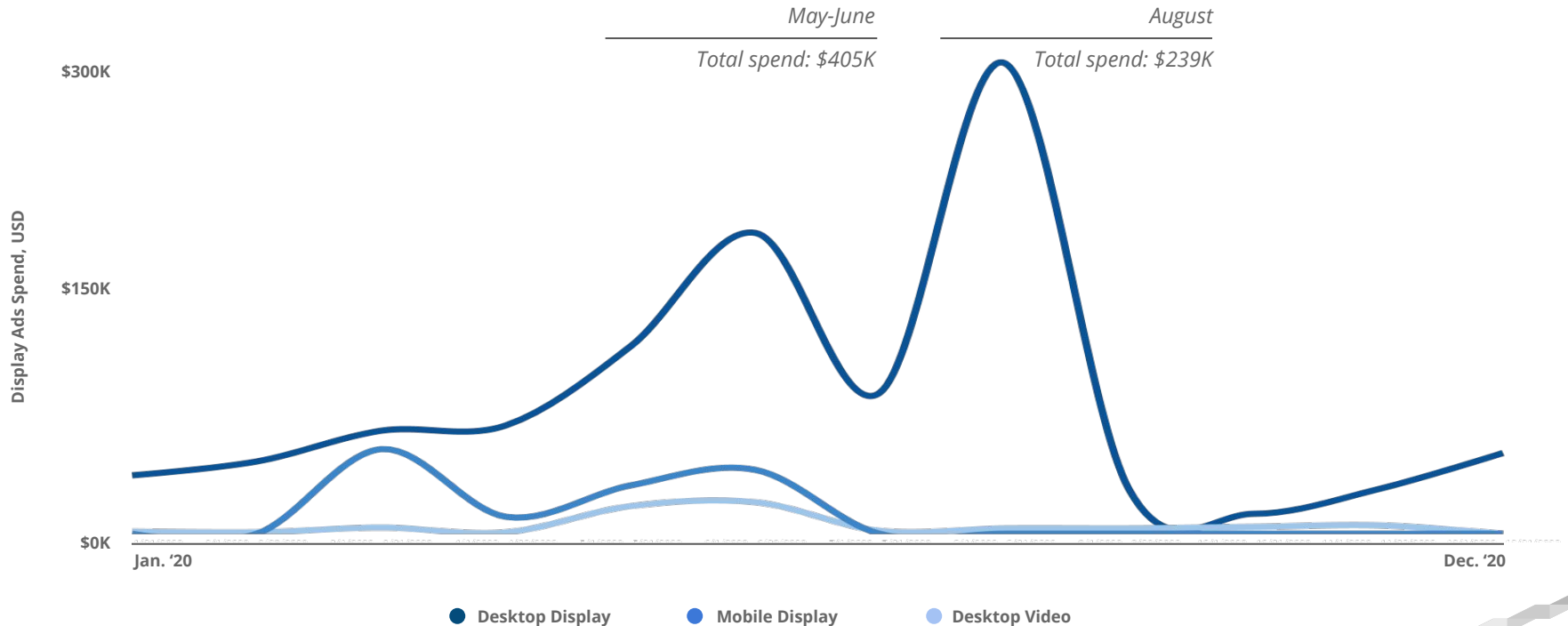
\*imdb.com  
foxnews.com

yahoo.com  
cnn.com

### Mobile Display

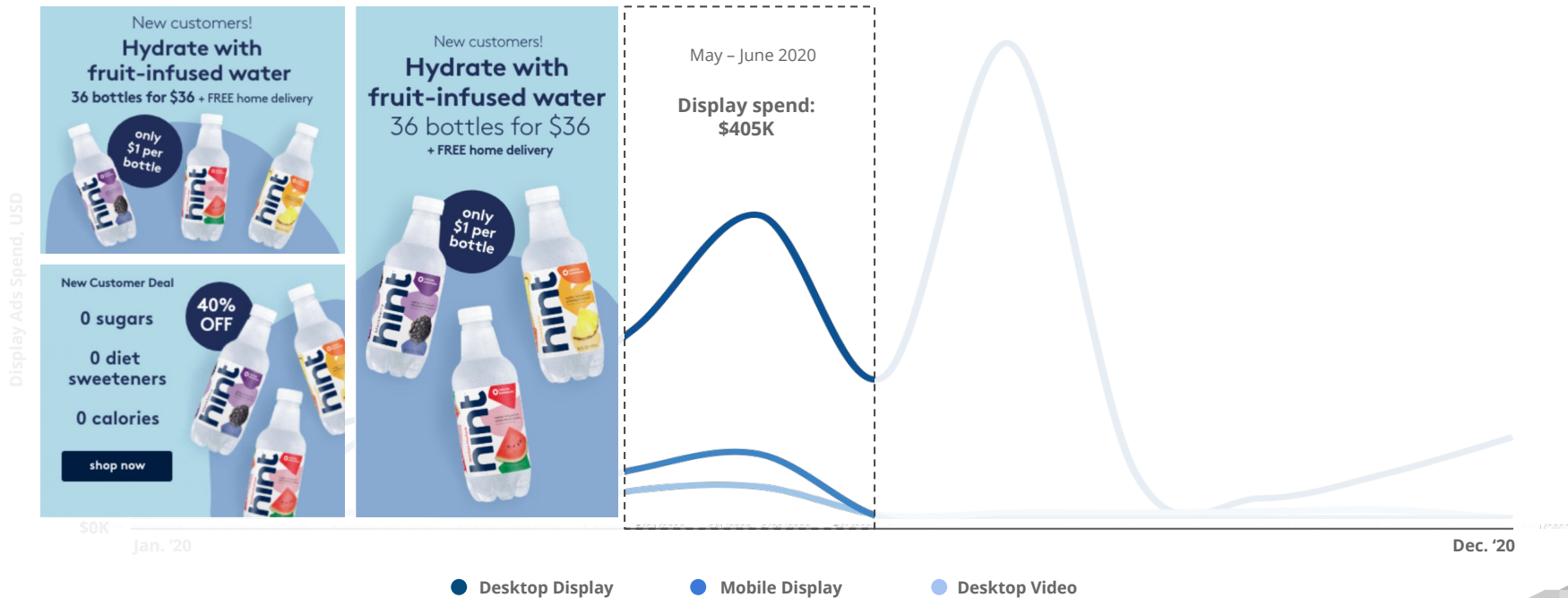
Hint ran their mobile display banners predominantly on the media websites, such as [Mashable](#) and [KOED](#). The two websites, received 70% of Hint's total mobile display budget (43K).

**Hint has been consistently supporting its Display ads channel throughout 2020, with two significant pushes in May-June and August 2020.**



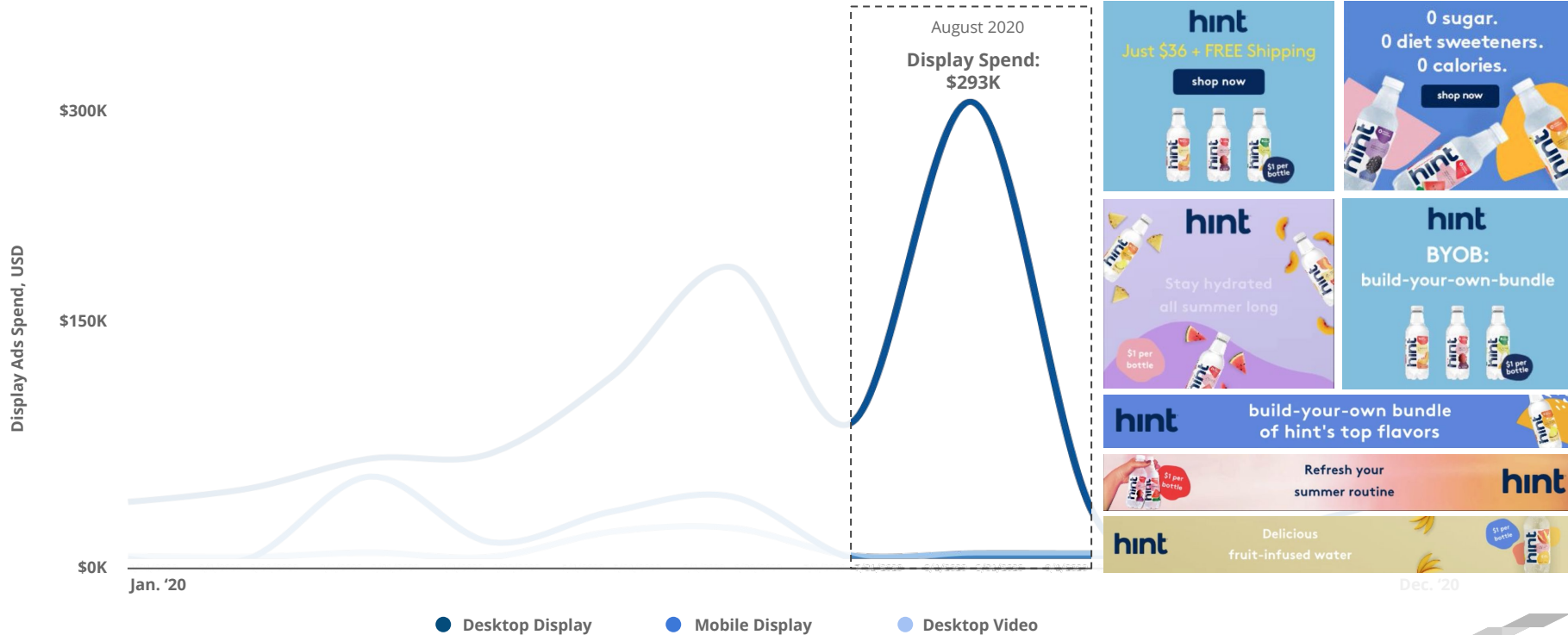
\*Spend is a directional approximation and does not include retargeting or behavioural targeting.

In June, Hint ran a campaign targeted at the new customer acquisition. The promo advertised “40% off” and “\$1 per bottle” for new clients.



\*Spend is a directional approximation and does not include retargeting or behavioural targeting.

In August Hint aimed to amplify brand awareness with Display ads messaging varying from “Free Shipping”, “0 sugar,” and “build-your-own-bundle.”



\*Spend is a directional approximation and does not include retargeting or behavioural targeting.

The two product-focused video ads called to buy the products on amazon.com



[Click to watch](#)

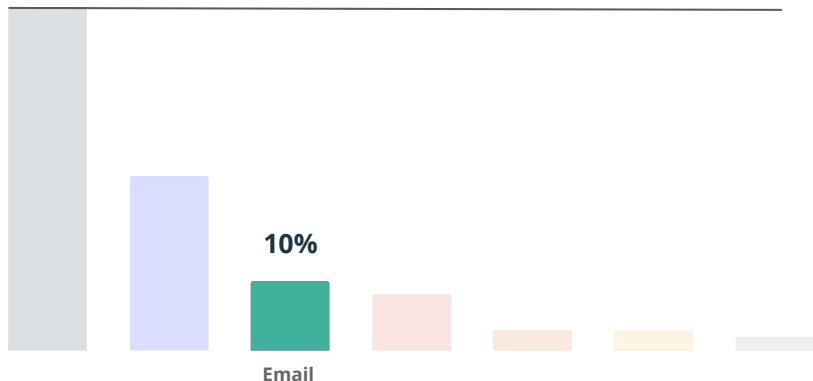


[Click to watch](#)

## Email

[Traffic sent from web-based mail clients such as Gmail.]

*Marketing channel mix, 2020*



Definition by SimilarWeb

In 2020, Hint doubled the share of Email traffic to its website. The brand's website is well optimized to capture user emails at various points of the consumer journey.

Being a DTC brand, Hint invests significant efforts in maintaining direct communication with their customers and having access to their data.

Besides leveraging Email as a sales and transactional channel, Hint also aims to make their communication more personal by sending emails signed by the company's founder and CEO Kara Goldin.

Hint created multiple entry points on their website for customers to join the brand's email list.

### Subscription sign up

step 1:  
how often should we deliver your Hint?

deliver every  
**14 days**

☐

★ MOST POPULAR

deliver every  
**30 days**

☒

deliver every  
**60 days**

☐

You'll receive a subscription reminder email 3 days before every shipment.

### Checkout process

Contact information

Already have an account? [Log in](#)

Email



Keep me up to date on news and exclusive offers

hint®

Email List



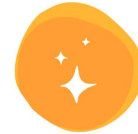
### Rewards program

how it works



Join

Create an account  
to get started.



Earn Points

Earn points every  
time you shop.



Redeem

Redeem points for  
discounts on purchases  
or hint products.

### Newsletter

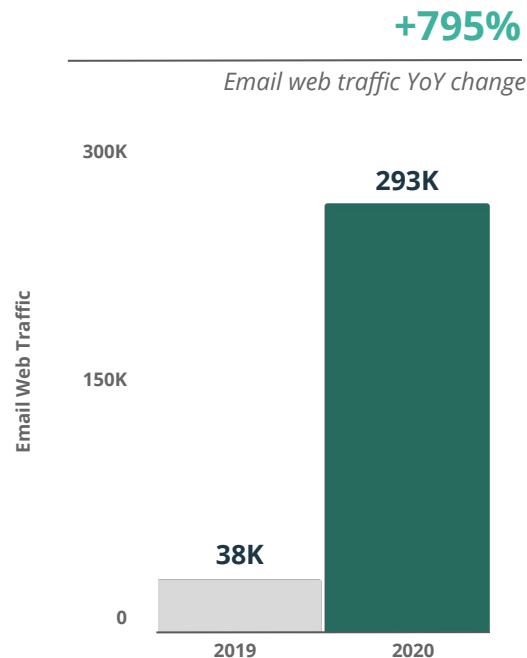
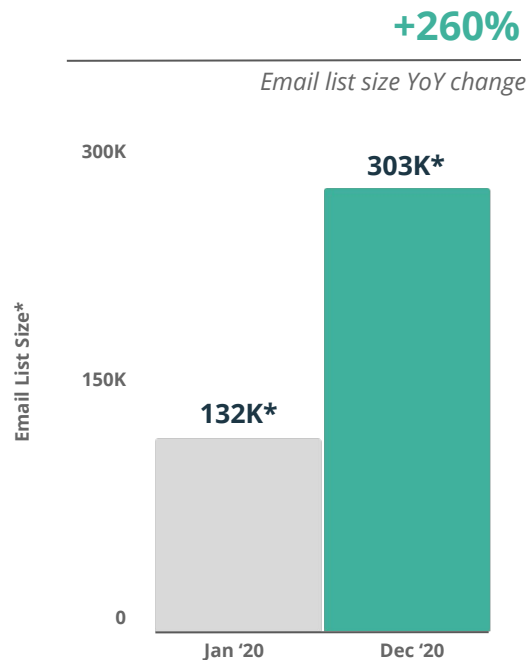
sign up for our newsletter!

email@drinkhint.com

sign up



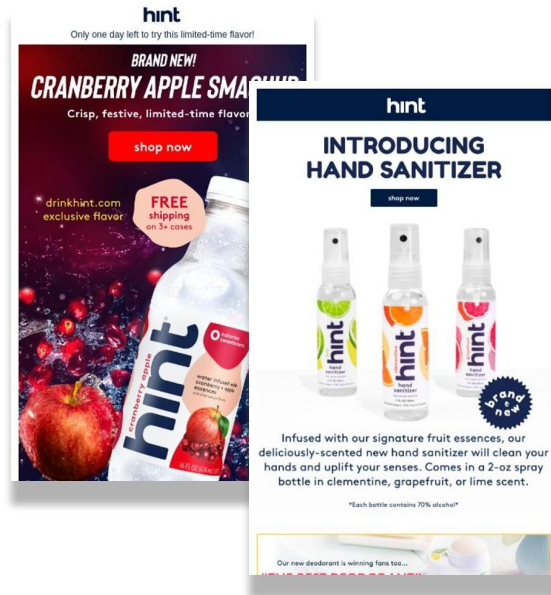
Hint's email list grew by **+260%** in 2020 and the brand sent ~19M emails to their subscribers throughout the year. The company saw a **+795%** increase in website traffic coming from the Email channel in 2020.



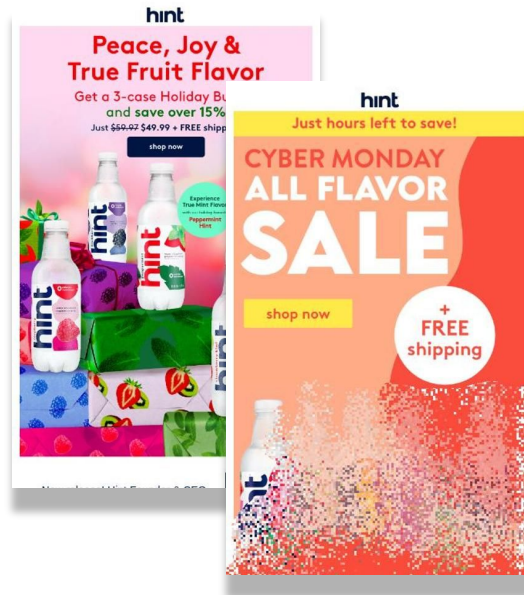
\*Estimates, directional data

The brand actively advertised discounts and new product launches, and Hint's founder and CEO Kara Goldin also communicated with the brand's subscribers via email.

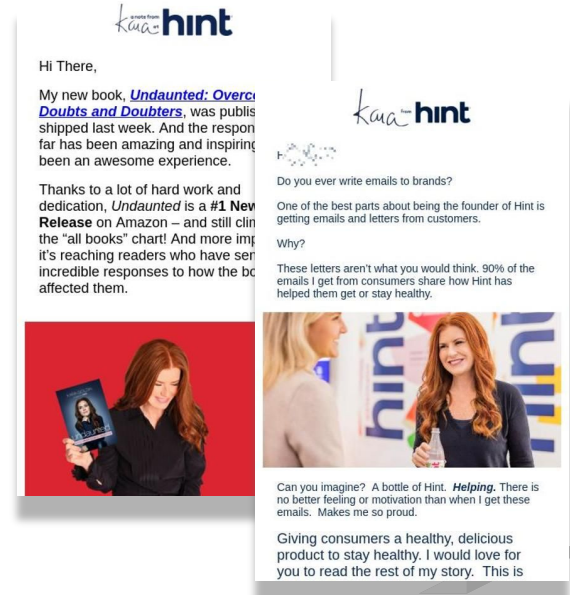
## New products



## Discounts



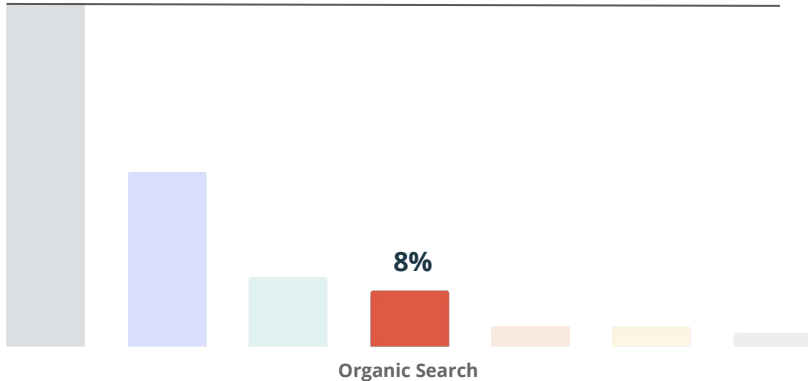
## From CEO



## Organic Search

[ Traffic sent via organic (non-paid) results on search engines such as Google or Bing. ]

*Marketing channel mix, 2020*

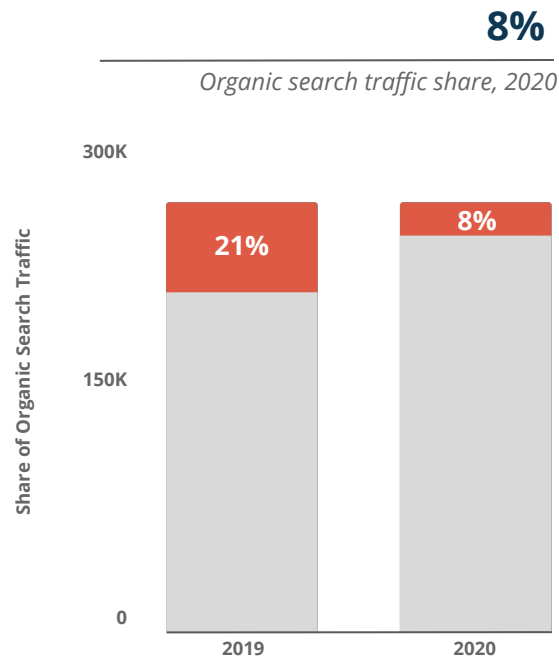
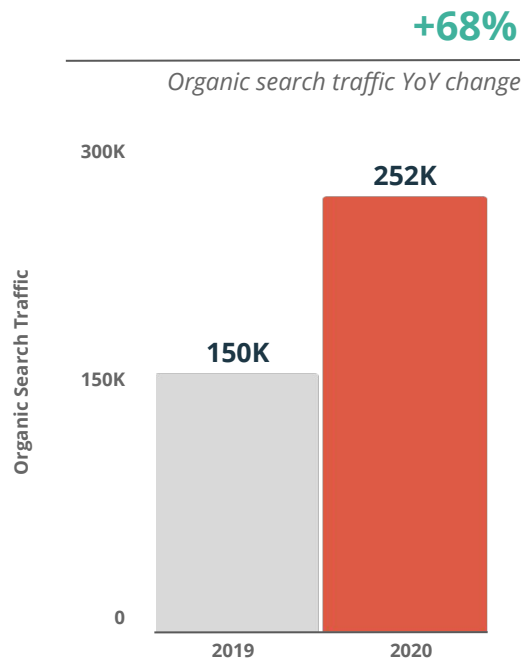


Hint relies on its strong brand name to drive visits to its website. 66% of all Search traffic comes from branded keywords.

The company's e-commerce website is primarily optimized to collect user data and drive sales.

Hint doesn't invest in any written content that would amplify search engine optimization and bring more traffic from non-branded keywords.

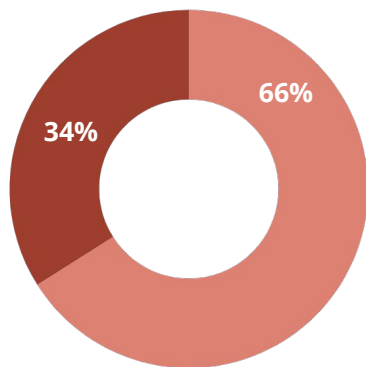
**Organic Search traffic increased from 150K visits in 2019 to 252K in 2020. However, this channel grew much slower compared to other channels (Direct, Display Ads, Email) and its traffic share dropped from 20% to 8% in 2020.**



**66% of Organic Search traffic came from different combinations of branded keywords. Desktop searches were mainly focused on product flavours and ingredients, while mobile searches were more action-oriented— such as “where to buy hint,” “hint special offers.”**

**66%**

*Branded keywords search traffic*



● Non-Branded ● Branded

### Top 10 keywords

hint water

hint

drinkhint

hintwater

hint flavoured water

drinkhint.com

hint drink

hint inc

drink hint

hint water ingredients

### Desktop Search

On desktop, people search for hint products (water, sunscreen), flavors, and ingredients.

### Mobile Search

Mobile searches are more immediate and purchase-oriented —where to buy hint, special offers.

**72% of all inbound search traffic landed on the homepage. Product section “Water” accounted for 14% of search traffic.**

Share of  
inbound  
search  
traffic



Water with a touch of  
true fruit flavor

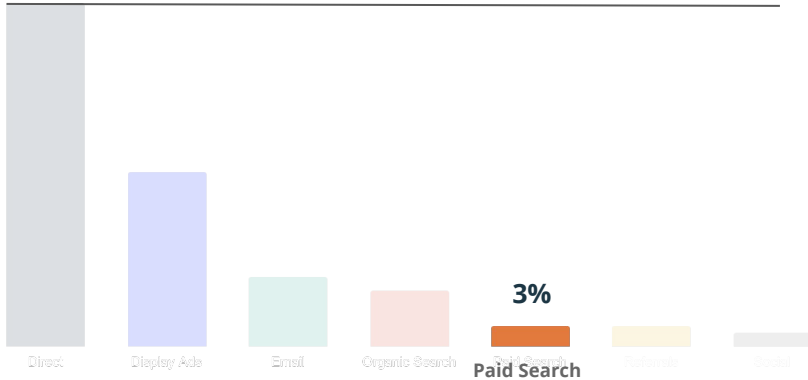
shop water

Amazing sunscreen,  
deodorant & hand  
sanitizer

## Paid Search

[Traffic sent from paid search ads on a search engine such as Google or Bing.]

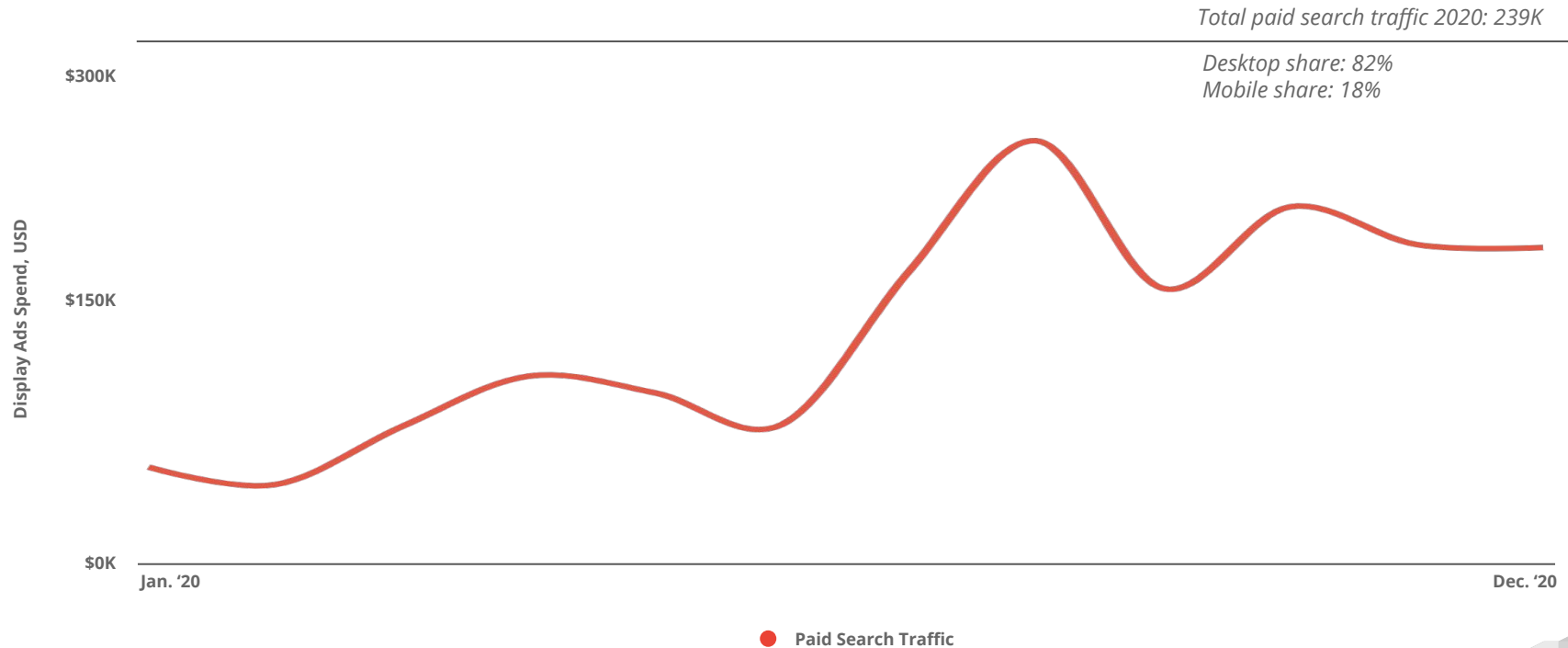
Marketing channel mix, 2020



Hint significantly increased their investment into lower funnel search ads in 2020. A 1,529% Search ads budget increase drove 239K visits, which is an 89% increase YoY.

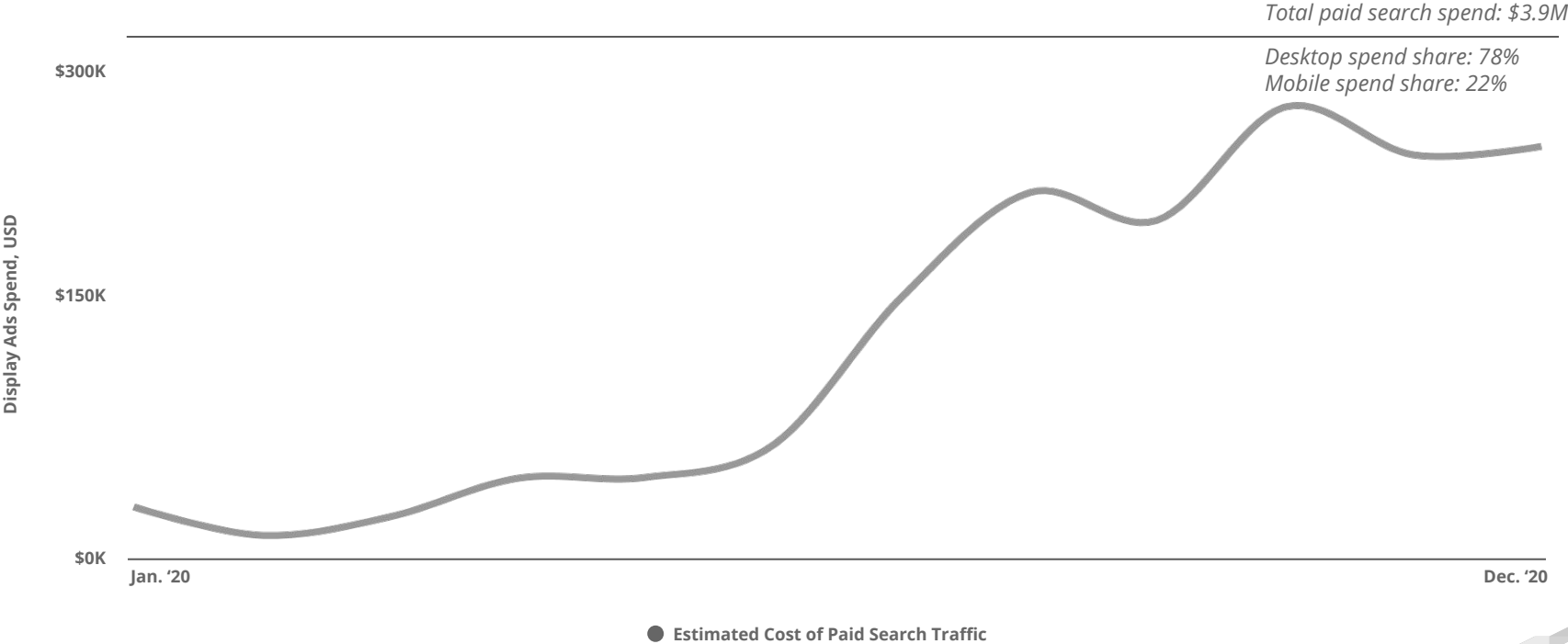
At the same time, Hint enhanced its search text ads copy and greatly revised targeted keywords—from brand name variations to the purchase-oriented search phrases.

## Hint's paid search traffic significantly increased in the second half of the year.





The spike was driven by a significant increase in Search budget.



## Throughout 2020, Hint ran a total of 272 text search ad variants (vs. 729 in 2019).

Hint targeted various **keyword phrases that captured users' intent** and interest. Hint significantly differentiated their targeted keywords compared to 2019.

is hint water good for you

propylene glycol and hint water

what's in hint water

cheapest place to get hint water

hint water ingredients

hint water infused with

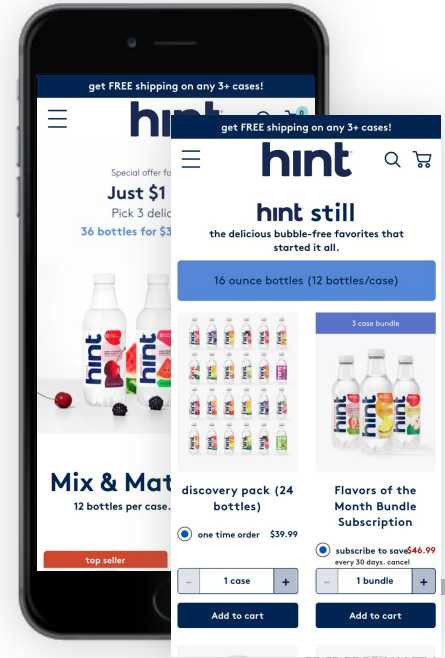
Elaborate text ads, **provided value and reason to click** (i.e. discounts, bundle deals).

www.drinkhint.com/  
**Delivered to Your Door - 36 Bottles for Only \$36 - drinkhint.com**  
Just \$1 Per Bottle + Free Shipping. Save 40% on our top flavors. Drink Water, Not Sugar. New Customers Save 40%, Free Shipping. Buy 3 Cases & Ships Free. 25+ Delicious Flavors. Save When You Subscribe. Types: Watermelon, Pineapple, Lemon, Blackberry, Cherry.

www.drinkhint.com/  
**Fruit-Infused Water, Kids Watermelon Flavor by Hint**  
Fun, Delicious, Parent-Approved Water With An Amazing Fruit Taste That Kids Love. It's Time We Stopped Filling Our Kids With Cans Of Sugar And Artificial Sweeteners. Save when you subscribe. Convenient ordering. Types: Watermelon, Pineapple, Lemon, Blackberry.

www.drinkhint.com/36-for-36/limited-time  
**Hint® Fruit-Infused Water | 36 Bottles for Only \$36**  
Just \$1 Per Bottle + Free Shipping. Save 40% on our top flavors. Drink Water, Not Sugar. New Customers Save 40% on Our Top Flavors Today. 25+ Delicious Flavors.

Ads alternated between directing users to the **homepage** and **product detail pages**.



**Hint also ran product search ads for all product categories: water, body products, and bundles.  
Some of Hint's product ads set to capture traffic for as many as 122 different keywords.**

While Hint used product images in line with the Google Shopping best practices, the brand added badges to the product images to highlight new or promotional SKUs.



**\$16.99**

Image of Hint Starter Pack  
Hint Water



**\$29.99**

Hint Eucalyptus Lemon Deodorant 3-Pack ...  
Hint Water



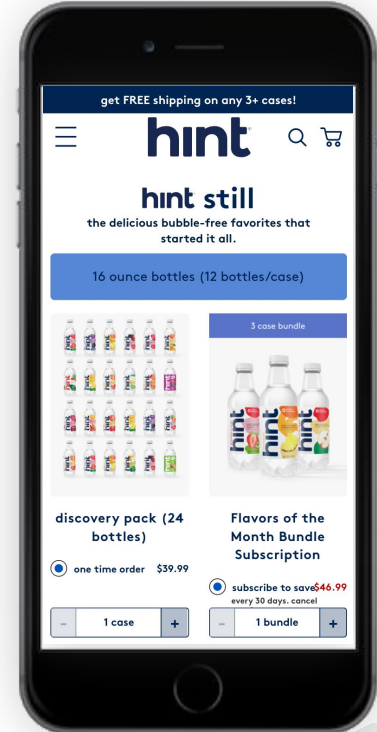
**\$10.99**

Hint Eucalyptus Lemon Deodorant  
Hint Water

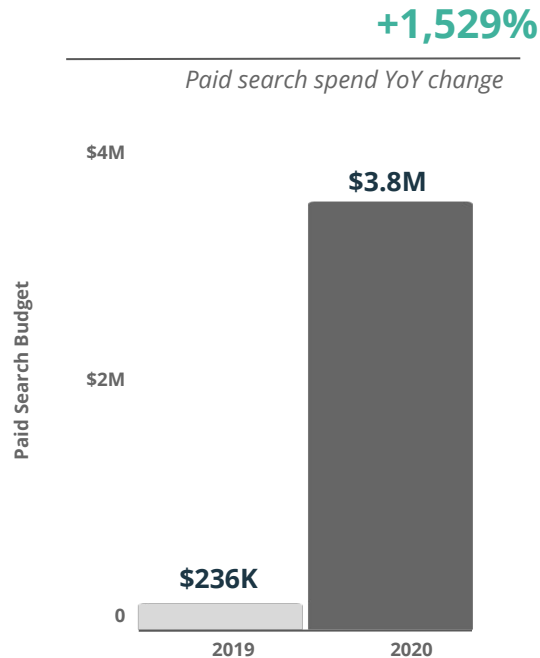
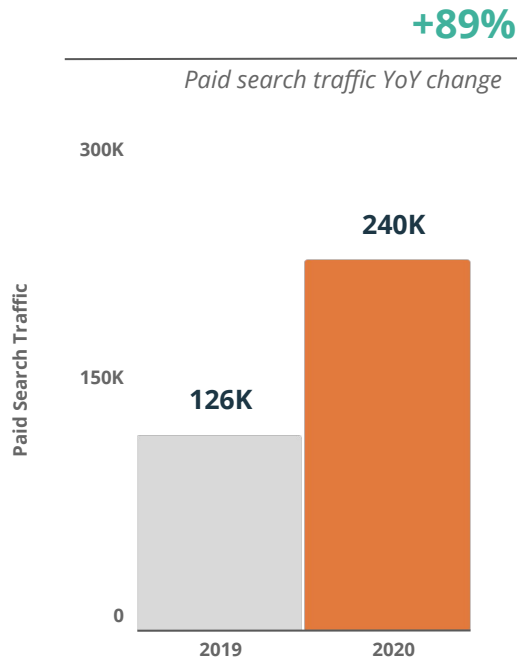


**\$16.99**

Hint Kids Flavored Water Variety Pack  
Hint Water



**A 1,529% increase in Search ads spend in 2020 drove only 89% more search traffic than the previous year.**



## Referrals

Traffic sent from one website to another, through a direct link. This kind of traffic includes affiliates, content partners, and traffic from direct media buying or news coverage.

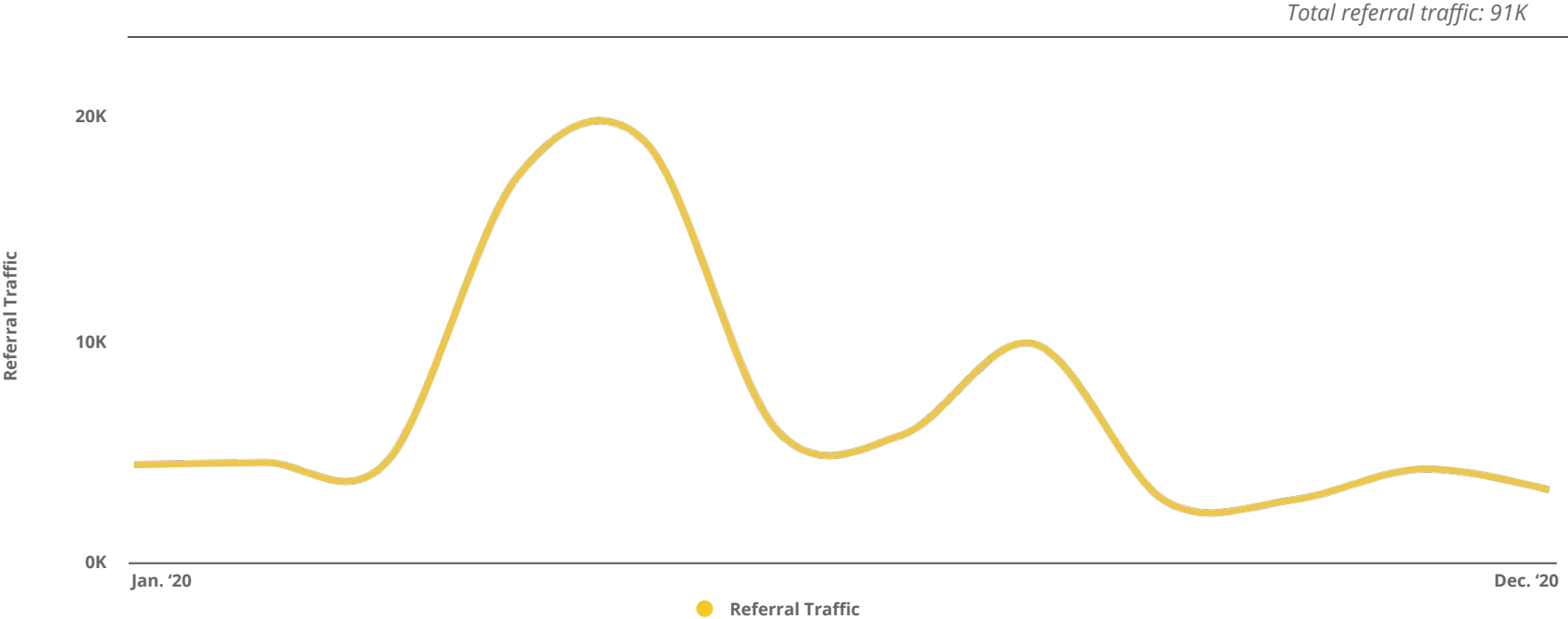
*Marketing channel mix, 2020*



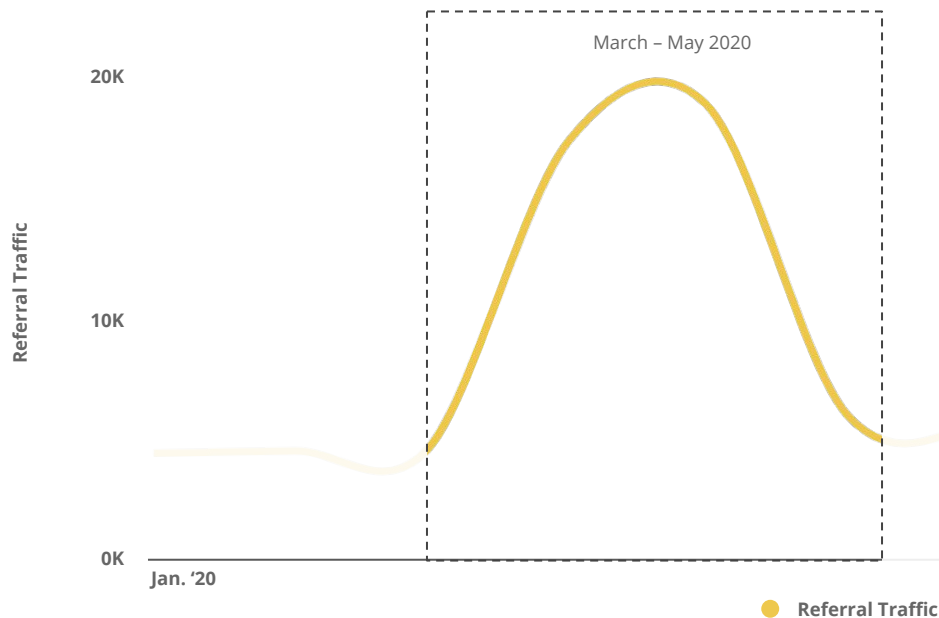
Hint is receiving a lot of PR coverage and has a significant number of backlinks pointing to its website.

However, the brand saw the highest spike in Referral traffic when it collaborated with coupons and discounts websites in the spring of 2020.

**Referral visits spiked between March and May 2020 and drove nearly twice as much traffic as the channel average (5% vs. 3% yearly average).**



Hint distributed their coupons and promo codes via discount websites, which in total contributed 80% of the total Referral visits.



### Top referring websites:

swagbucks.com

rakuten.com

mypoints.com

bradsdeals.com

### Coupon examples:

**Free**  
SHIPPING  
\$20 ORDERS

New customers get over \$20 off + FREE shipping on delicious fruit-infused Hint water + **Earn \$15 Cash Back**

Expires: Oct. 13, 2021

**Free**  
SHIPPING  
HOT OFFER

Get Free Shipping on any 3+ Cases. + **Earn \$15 Cash Back**

No Expiration Date

**Hot**  
DEAL  
OFFER

New Customer Special - Buy 2 Cases of Hint Kids, Get 1 Case Free + Free Shipping. + **Earn \$15 Cash Back**

Expires: May. 5, 2023

Dec. '20

## Social Traffic

[Traffic sent from social media sites such as Facebook or Reddit (organic and paid). Including direct media buying from Facebook.]

*Marketing channel mix, 2020*



Definition by SimilarWeb

Hint invested 65% more into their social ads in 2020 and added Instagram (story and feed ads) into the mix.

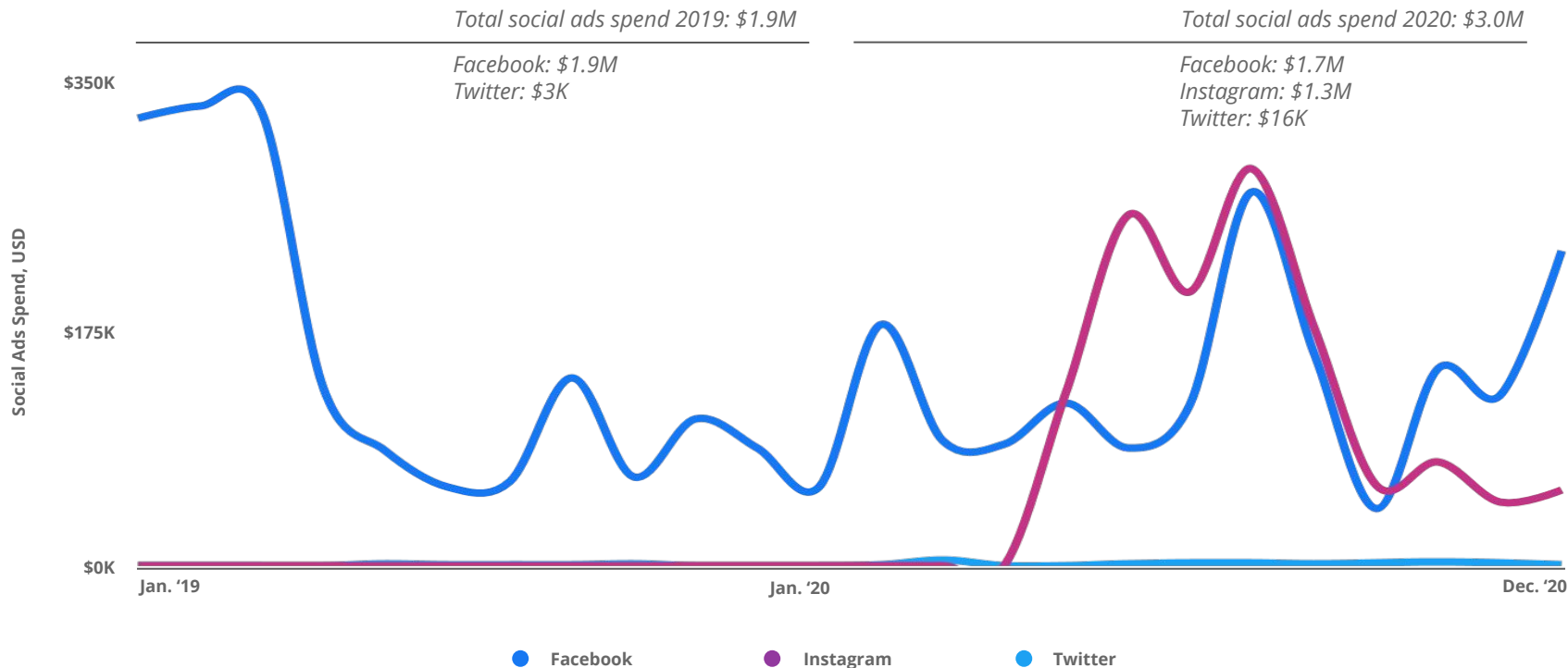
Hint spent its advertising dollars to both boost its brand awareness and promote special offers.

This additional investment wasn't directly reflected neither in the website traffic nor the social following.

However, the top funnel ads might enhance consumer purchasing decisions via other channels, such as offline retailers or amazon.com.



In 2020, Hint spend 3M on social media ads, which is **76%** more than the previous year. Hint also added Instagram to the advertising mix and invested 1.3M in this platform alone.

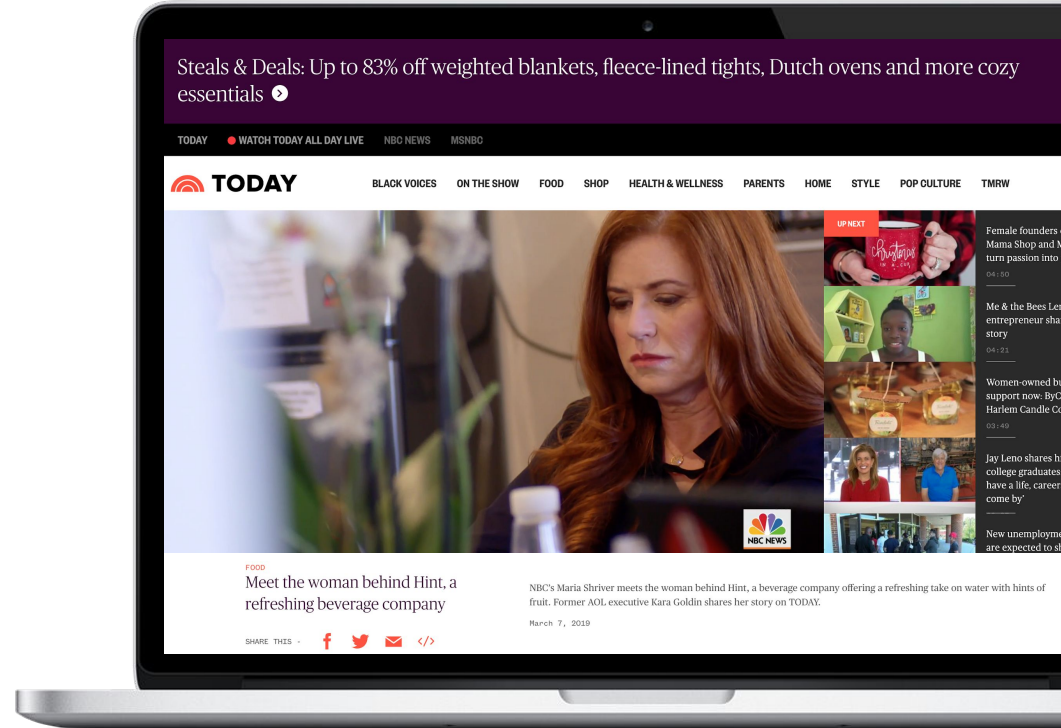


\*Spend is a directional approximation and does not include retargeting or behavioural targeting.

With its Facebook ads Hint aimed to drive brand awareness rather than sales. Hint has been continuously sponsoring the founder-story ad (\$741K), which was driving traffic to the external Today news website rather than Hint's ecommerce one.

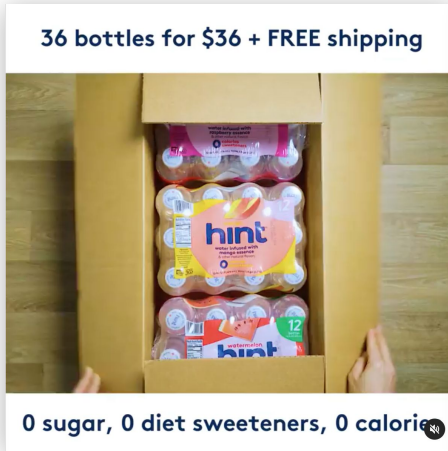


Spend: **\$741K**  
CPM: **\$7.9**



[Click to view](#)

On Instagram, Hint ran conversion-oriented ads that promoted their 36 bottles for \$36 pack and free shipping.



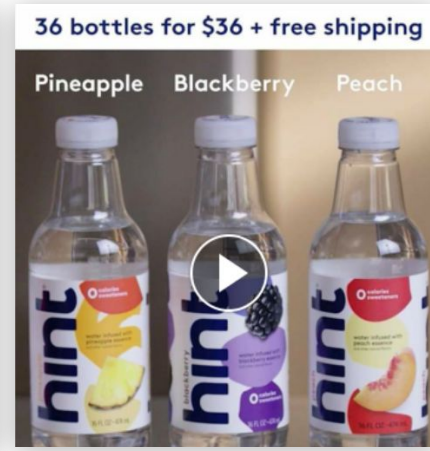
Spend: **\$99K**  
CPM: **\$6.8**

[Click to view](#)



Spend: **\$92K**  
CPM: **\$6.8**

[Click to view](#)



Spend: **\$77K**  
CPM: **\$6.8**

[Click to view](#)

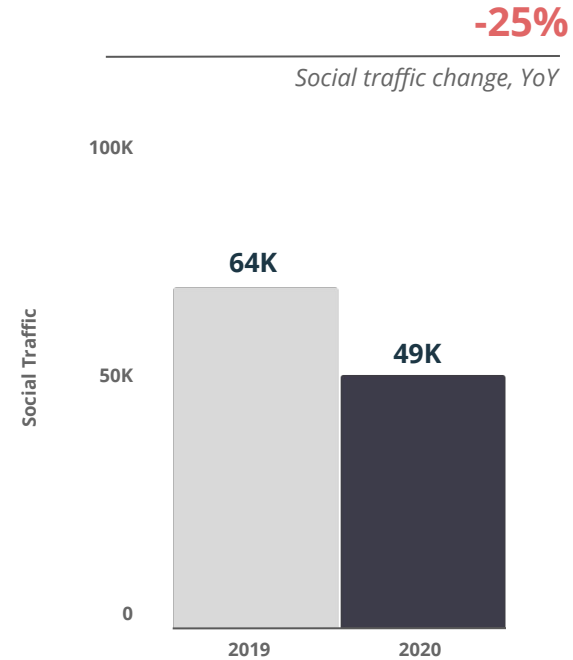
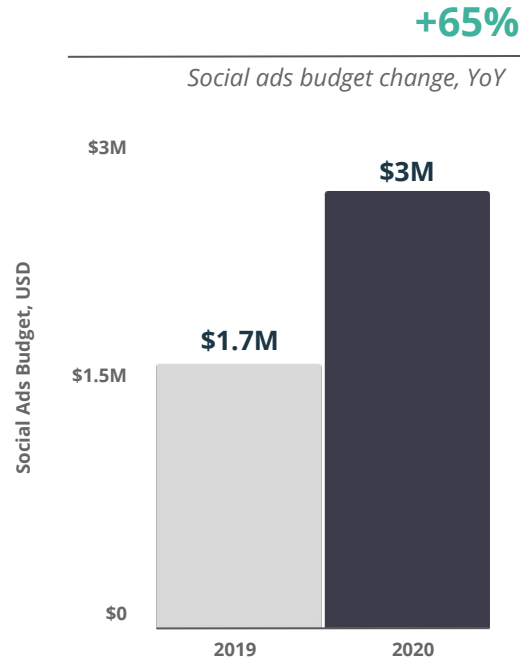


Spend: **\$43K**  
CPM: **\$6.6**

[Click to view](#)

\*Spend is a directional approximation and does not include retargeting or behavioural targeting.

**Despite a 65% increase in social media advertising budget, the traffic to Hint's website from social channels dropped by 25%.**



\*Spend is a directional approximation and does not include retargeting or behavioural targeting.

# Key Takeaways

## From the Marketing Strategy to Grow Website Traffic by 344% Case Study:

**Focus Allocation — Invest in Your Own Sales Channels:** Hint was launched in 2015 and set to build out its retail distribution via national retailers, such as Whole Food and amazon.com. Despite having substantial national coverage, the company launched its own ecommerce website in 2014 and by the end of 2019 40% of all company's sales were done via its own online shop.

**Website — Collect and Leverage User Data:** Having an established brand name, Hint optimized its website for data collection and conversion rather than discovery. The company doesn't maintain any content sections (i.e. blog) on their site to amplify search engine optimization and increase non-branded organic search traffic. Instead, drinkhint.com is well optimized for collecting user emails at various points of their web user journey.

**Paid Ads Tactic — Maximize Frequency to Grow Top-Of-Mind Awareness:** Hint has built a comprehensive system to boost both online and offline sales. The brand continuously invests in brand marketing and aims to further strengthen the image of a healthy and innovative company (PR activities, Facebook Ads). At the same time, they also run conversion-oriented Instagram and search ads to direct consumers to their ecommerce website.

**Branding — Personify Your Brand:** Hint's founder and CEO Kara Goldin has become an influential business woman who is often featured in Hint's advertising, email newsletter, as well as their PR coverage. Kara published a book, launched a podcast, and appeared in a Verizon TV ad which has helped drive Hint's brand awareness.

**Advertising Focus — Paid Search & Instagram:** Hint is aggressively advertising via paid search channels as their paid search ad spend increased by +1,529% YoY from \$236K to \$3.8M in 2020. Paid search ads targeted various keyword phrases that captured users' intent and interest such as "is hint water good for you" and "propylene glycol and hint water."

In addition, Hint increased their social media ad spend by +76% in 2020 which was driven by a significant investment in Instagram (\$1.3M). Instagram ads are mainly conversion-oriented ads that promoted "36 bottles for \$36."