

Digital Marketing Trends



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Almost every marketer wishes they had a crystal ball so they could peer into the future and see what's hot in the coming year. Unfortunately, most of us are not clairvoyant, but we can usually look at certain current trends and predict which will have staying power. We can also look at emerging technology and how it can be used to further our marketing mission.

In this report, we will be looking at what has happened in 2018 and 2019. We will also look at the trends in tech, search engines, and technology and automation.

I. Looking Back at Top Trends Up Until Now

Live video has become increasingly popular. Seeing is believing for a target audience. They also like to feel as though they know the businesses that they are dealing with, and that they are run by real people who are not just out to make money. Looking inside the business and looking into product creation are just a few of the ways to build a relationship with your audience.

- Instagram and Snapchat continue to grow in popularity, especially amongst 18- to 30-year-olds.
- The Smartphone boom continues, with marketers trying to connect with their prospects in a range of ways, including text and apps.
- Chatbots are being used more and more to open and maintain a dialogue with customers, and deliver valuable marketing information.
- Facebook Messenger got a much-needed overhaul and marketing push. It is now a much more convenient tool and a handy chatbot if you set it up correctly to respond to trigger words.
- Facebook lead ads can be one of the fastest ways to grow your email marketing list - provided that you use attractive images, write a good ad, and automate the process of adding the new names to your list to save time. It's also good for generating leads for Salesforce.com and other customer relations management software.
- Everyone loves a good story. Using storytelling in marketing offers a structure people are familiar with and leads to satisfied customers getting a vision of living happily ever after.

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- Influencer marketing is growing in popularity as more marketers try to connect with their target audience. Influencers with a large number of active followers could be the gateway to a lot more traffic and profits. Even if you pay the influencer to post your content to their followers, the return on investment can be considerable.
- Small business owners are catching on to the wonders of remarketing. Facebook pixels are easier than ever to use to track customers from your site and try to convert them from browsers into buyers. Some marketers report a conversion rate as high as 75%. The secret? More customized, varied content, rather than the same messaging they have already seen and acted upon.
- The most recent Google algorithm (formula) change hit on August 1, 2018. Google states that it was intended to give credit to worthy sites that were not getting as much attention as they deserved. While it still looks like a lot of Wikipedia, there have been some changes in placements. As always, the best way to optimize your content is to write naturally.

There will be a couple of changes coming up that are beginning to affect websites, and which are worth paying attention to. Let's look at the digital marketing landscape next.

II. The Digital Marketing Landscape

Some of the hot trends for Digital Marketing will continue, while others will also start to take center stage.

A. Search engine optimization — not keywords, but clusters

SEO will now be more about clusters, not keywords. This has been happening more and more in the last few years, but the algorithms are now being specifically set to look for groupings of words, not just isolated words.

Commonly referred to as semantic support, the algorithms will look at words in relation to one another to determine the meaning of a page and the relevance to a search query.

For example, the word "bachelor" actually has four different meanings:

- An unmarried man
- A person with a Bachelor's degree

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- A young knight
- A young male fur seal

If you see the sentence, "The bachelor lay on the beach," there is no clue as to which of the four meanings is intended.

On the other hand, if you say, "The animal behaviorists will be studying the bachelors on the beach at Peel for the next six months and determining their hunting and fishing patterns," then we know that the last meaning is intended. The other words give us clues so that even though the word "seal" is not mentioned, we can still infer it.

There are still arguments over short- versus long-form content. No one can agree on the ideal article or blog post length. Having said that, the longer an article is (650 to 700 words, for example), the more words will be clustered together, including "seal", and the more clues the search engine will get. About 500 words should be enough to get the point across if writers are really pressed for time and struggling to keep their site or blog updated.

The other thing to keep in mind in relation to this change is that it reduces keyword stuffing and encourages people to write naturally - for people, not just the search engines.

B. Voice search

With more and more households owning Alexa, Google Home, and similar products, voice search and artificial intelligence (AI) are here to stay. Around 65% of users say they don't see themselves getting rid of it anytime soon.

Estimates show that approximately 67 million voice devices will be in homes and offices in the US by 2019. Predictions show that by 2020, voice search queries will make up 50% of all queries. So, if you are not already factoring in voice search in reference to your marketing mix, now is the time.

The shift to more natural language in written content can help with this. However, voice search will change results and potentially starve some sites of traffic, because the way a person asks a question can be very different from the way they type in a query. Think semantic support and your content should be highly discoverable.

C. Predictive / Intent data

Google and Facebook search have enhanced their algorithms in relation to predictive and intent data. What do people want to accomplish when they run a particular search?

Unless you are operating in incognito mode, every search you run is giving these marketing giants information in order for them to then determine the intent of a search and what will be of most interest to you. They can even aggregate data from other sites to predict interest.

The trend is most obvious on mobile. If a person is out of their home (which the GPS locator will determine) and types in "coffee", the assumption will be that they need a café to go get a cup. A second option might be to list a local coffee and tea shop, or a supermarket. Bricks and mortar businesses need to make sure they have robust listings in Google, so they will be as discoverable in local search as possible - especially on mobile.

D. Mobile search is booming

Around 50% of all searches are carried out on mobile devices and that number is sure to rise as the latest generation of smartphones have more computing power than the desktop computers of just a few years ago.

E. Amazon, YouTube and Facebook are search engines too

Gone are the days when people used to go to Google for everything. Amazon is now a vast product search engine, with the ability to turn browsers into buyers in an instant with the help of their 1-Click shopping. If you want to make your products more discoverable, you need to be on Amazon.

YouTube is the largest video sharing site in the world, and growing larger with every passing second. Studies have shown that 75% of searches are related to how-to content. If you don't already have a channel and playlists with these types of content, you're missing out on the chance to market your business effectively to people who really want to know what you do.

Facebook has demonstrated the rise of social search, with users avoiding search engines completely as they search for information about products, services and topics within the Facebook interface. This is not likely to change, even though many keep saying Facebook is dead, is just for older users, and so on.

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While it is true that the most loyal users tend to be over the age of 30, it is also true that those under 30 who love Instagram and Snapchat still have an account at Facebook so they can keep up with family news, photos and so on.

III. Social Media Trends

This brings us to social media trends for Digital Marketing.

Social media will continue to grow

The biggest winner should be Instagram, due to it rapidly becoming increasingly popular with those in the 45- to 54-year-old age bracket. Their younger family members will be using it to post photos and video, so if they want to join in, they need an account.

A. Social eCommerce will also be on the rise

More than 50% of Pinterest users buy items they see on the site. Instagram now allows stores, and this trend is bound to continue.

B. Live video will continue to boom

The CEO of Facebook has predicted that the majority of content on Facebook will be video by 2020. Their system is easy to use and taps into the popularity of video rather than reading a blog post, for example. The secret will be to write keyword-rich titles and descriptions to make your videos more discoverable.

YouTube's live video feature is becoming increasingly popular as well, but pre-recorded video is also valuable. Around 90% of online shoppers report that watching videos about products helps them make their buying decision. YouTube is also becoming a hot social site, with engagement and comments similar to Facebook. Plus, it is a search engine, and owned by Google, so your videos have two chances to make it to the top of Google's search engine results.

If you're a blogger, turn into a vlogger at least part of the time. Videos boost response rates and accelerate the buying process. They are perfect for information marketing and product demonstrations.

C. Social proof is the name of the game now

Studies have shown that only around 7% of internet users trust marketing material issued by a brand, as compared with around 72% who trust the recommendations of someone in their social circle (even when they have never met the person in their life). This trend is what has allowed bots to create fake "people" to influence decisions about politics, purchasing and more.

Facebook and Twitter are doing what they can to weed out the scammers and cybercriminals, but the fact is that a review from a "friend" can influence shopping decisions more strongly than any marketing message most brands can put out. Therefore, the secret here might be to make ads look less like ads, such as by creating stories on Instagram and Snapchat, and carousels on Facebook.

D. Native ads

In addition to stories, there are "native ads" - that is, ads which look like content. Sponsored pages and posts on Facebook would be a good example of a native ad. They don't appear on the side in little boxes any more, but right in a person's news feed. They are useful and informative, rather than "buy now" ads.

Instead of being intrusive and distracting, they can convey a story in a more natural way, with storytelling being another hugely popular marketing trend that is not going away any time soon.

Using native ads offer the chance to tell your brand story in a way that will help you a stronger emotional connection with your target audience. The emotional connection can then lead to engagement, click-throughs and conversions.

Due to the very detailed audience selection opportunities, there is much more likelihood of tapping into exactly the niche you are working in, rather than the more scattered Google ads. This means the ads will match user needs better and could lead to more conversions for less money compared with Google Ads (formerly AdWords).

E. Chatbots as marketing tools

Chatbot tools have surged in popularity over the past year and this trend is likely to continue. While they are not perfect, they are getting better, as marketers become better about predicting what user will type in and therefore what keywords will trigger the (hopefully) correct response.

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The main goal is to ensure that the user experience with a chatbot is so good that they won't know it is a bot, or won't feel frustrated about getting a bot instead of a human.

Determining the various scenarios your chatbot should address, the different paths and responses users may take, and setting up for them, will all require time and effort. But the results can be well worth it. It can lead to happier customers, and significant savings. Estimates show that by 2022, chatbots could save companies who use them more than \$8 billion per year.

Facebook Messenger is now highly programmable, so if you have a significant number of customers using this method to contact you, it's time to start programming it.

F. Facebook ads will grow

Facebook ads offers a range of formats for different purposes. The way Ads Manager is set up is so simple, even a beginner can use it if they follow along. The goal-oriented organization at the start when setting up the ads also helps advertisers avoid making any mistakes when it comes to choosing the right format. Having a goal means it's easier to track the success of the ad and progress towards achieving the goal, which in turn will mean time and money saved.

G. Don't overlook Instagram

Instagram is now part of the Facebook ad network. Set your ads to run on both, but do pay attention to the highly visual aspect of Instagram when creating them.

H. LinkedIn sponsored updates

These will never be as popular as Facebook ads, but they can be useful for certain companies, particularly those who sell to businesses rather than consumers.

I. Snapchat advertising will grow

Snapchat has 200 million daily users, watching 10 billion videos per day. If you want to tap into this market of 18- to 34-year-old users, running ads on Snapchat will be your best bet. They are young, on mobile, and spend more than \$200 billion a year on food, fashion, music and technology.

While it is true that social proof has pushed down ads as a means of conveying a believable message, ads that are helpful (not hype) can still influence buyer behavior.

J. Advertising trends

In addition to the new ad formats in Facebook and opportunities Snapchat now offers, Amazon is coming up and set to take on Google Ads and Facebook Ads. Why? Because the ads are in a location where people are already in "shopping mode".

Studies have shown that in 2018 they have already taken up to 3% of the market once dominated by Google and Facebook, for a total of nearly \$3 billion in ad revenue. Google will be the biggest loser because Ads is not as precisely targeted and the system is clunky and hard to use for beginner advertisers. It is also more expensive than Facebook and the quality score system much more arbitrary than the Facebook relevance score assigned to their ads.

IV. Offline Marketing Trends

Offline marketing may appear to be dead compared with the many ways to market online, but it is still alive and well and thriving in certain areas.

A. Physical branding

Almost everyone in the world can instantly recognize the golden arches of McDonald's, the checkmark of Nike, and the mermaid of Starbucks. Branding on every physical item possible is the name of the game. More than 70% of people are visual learners and over 90% of people react to the information they see.

Given that you have a split second to attract attention to your business online, and up to eight seconds in the real world, if you sell physical products and/or have a bricks and mortar presence, make sure you have an instantly recognizable logo and put it on all relevant items - from all your products, to your letter head and business cards. Businesses are even projecting logos on buildings and in the sky, so get creative and see what your business can afford.

B. Sponsorship

Sponsoring events such as charity events, live events related to your niche or industry, and local community gatherings, are a great way to get your logo and other aspects of your business seen. It may cost less than you think as well.

First, there is the chance to meet with real people in the community - or elsewhere if you are hosting, for example, a conference about internet marketing at a hotel in Las Vegas. People do

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business with people they like, so don't underestimate the power of meeting people in person and showing you are "the real deal" - which is another reason for using live video in your business.

Most events have varying levels of sponsorship, from your logo (and those of others) on the t-shirt for the Leukemia Walk, to having your name and company description in the program.

C. Live events

Whether you have the budget to create a conference yourself, or you just attend a tradeshow as an exhibitor, live events still offer one of the best opportunities to meet, greet and mingle.

If you have a bricks and mortar location, offer talks, demonstrations and special events that are relevant to your target audience. For example, if you own a restaurant, have a special cooking lesson evening with a theme (such as Italian food) and give them recipes to take home with them.

If you are going to run a meeting in a hotel or resort, make sure everything is branded with your logo.

D. Classified ads

These are still alive and well in local papers, and very affordable. Run a regular ad with a reason for them to come online and connect with you, such as a free download. A QR code loaded with information about your business, and your URL, can also help drive people online.

E. Digital signage

Digital signs are all around us and attract around 70% more viewers than a banner ad online, yet most marketers don't even know they exist - let alone use them.

A digital sign on your bricks and mortar location commands attention. Marketing messaging inside on a screen, with your latest videos, also tells prospects more about your business.

If you don't have the space at your location, chances are a nearby business will. As long as you are not direct competitors, ask about running ads with them to drive traffic to your business.

F. Google Local listings

Yes, these are online but they get people in the door, such as people out shopping, tourists and so on. Then it is up to you to get them to stay, with an attractive menu (for example), signage, and a customer-centric attitude.

G. User-generated content

This is also online, but addresses the real world. People check in on Foursquare. They write reviews of your food on Seamless.com. The reviews will encourage people to come in the door. Social proof and testimonials from credible sources can translate into offline opportunities to get an edge on your competition.

Use the best reviews and quotations on screens, your menu and more. Studies have shown that user-generated content gets eight times more attention than anything a business releases. They will even pay attention to content from your employees, so don't be shy about asking them for feedback as well.

H. Selling experiences

Older people with higher levels of discretionary income are not just looking to buy products; they want experiences as well. These can be something unique and memorable that they can only get in the real world.

Think of what people need when they are on vacation, for example. A hotel/accommodation, a car, food, water, souvenirs... Package deals are popular because they can get everything for one (low or reasonable) price.

Those searching for experiences will have similar needs. Look at Groupon deals, for example. They offer a package at 50% off the retail price. The retail price can be relatively realistic, but it is not carved in stone. For example, an apple picking day with a wine tasting on the way home may or may not be worth \$40, but it certainly looks like a bargain compared with \$80 and is a great way to get people in the door.

When they are enjoying themselves at your orchard or vineyard, for example, chances are they will buy items on offer - especially if they can't get them anywhere else. In the example above, freshly pressed apple cider, apple cider donuts, apple pies, bottles of wine, and homemade

jams, jellies and preserves would be good examples of ways to make even more money from experience seekers.

Similarly, those who go to a spa want an experience. If they discover wonderful massage oil or gorgeous scented candles during their experience, chances are they will buy them.

V. Other Marketing Trends on the Rise

A. Personalization

One of the reasons Amazon is so successful is that it knows you so well. Their algorithms can deliver personalized recommendations, which are preferred by around 56% of the online shoppers and a reason they say they would remain loyal to a store or brand.

If we look at some of Amazon's features, we can see the personalized Wishlist is a great way for customers to show their interests and also remind themselves of what should hopefully be future purchases.

Then there are the bundles, which include the item searched for and other items often purchased together. For example, if you are looking for an HP ink cartridge, you will usually be offered the chance to buy the entire set of four for one low price. Those prices may not be the lowest available on the internet, but it does save time and effort not having to look up all four cartridges separately.

Amazon also has "those who bought A also bought B" recommendations. In addition, they send out emails with recommendations to try to further tempt you into shopping with them.

Storing profiles and matching technology is getting more sophisticated, so even small businesses can use them. One example would be remarketing.

B. Remarketing

If you've ever searched for something and then noticed that the item seems to "follow you" around the internet, you're not imagining things. It's a process called remarketing.

Remarketing works by dropping a cookie in your browser to track you. Businesses set up the cookies on their product pages. The cookie turns on when you land on the product description page, and will be commanded to turn off on your site at another particular page, such as the

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order confirmation page. This is a signal that you have purchased that item and you don't need to see it any more.

If you don't purchase the item, the cookie is active for about 30 days and will stay active unless you buy the item. Those sites in the ad network running the remarketing campaign will then show you more ads about the item.

Remarketing services can be very expensive, but there is one easy way you can get started for very little cost, and that is through Facebook. In Facebook Ads Manager, create what is called a pixel, which is your own unique tracking cookie. Place it on the product pages you wish to remarket if a person doesn't buy.

Good choices might be an expensive item, and/or one that is a little complicated and might require more thought than just a snap decision to buy. Chances are that the more they see the item and learn about it, the more likely they will be to buy it.

C. Automation

The more you can automate your marketing, the better, to save time and work more efficiently. Zapier.com is reasonably priced and offers more than 1,000 automations, with more being added all the time.

Useful examples include transferring the email addresses from Facebook Lead Ads automatically onto a list in your email marketing platform such as AWeber.com, or cross-posting from Twitter to Facebook.

D. Popular technology

Every new smartphone that comes out these days has even more bells and whistles, and triggers a buying frenzy for the latest and greatest. T-Mobile and other top carriers will be moving to 5G, which might trigger support issues for older phones and lead to a buying frenzy.

Augmented reality (AR) headsets are also on the rise. Smart marketers are looking for ways to take advantage of this trend to get their messaging in front of the right audience.

E. Final Thoughts...

Both online and offline marketing are alive and well, but as with most things in life, they grow and change to suit the times and adapt to changing circumstances. No marketing predictions

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will be 100% right, but in general, if you follow what has been happening in the world of marketing recently, and act on it, you stand a much better chance of being ahead of the game compared with your competitors, and should be able to look forward to even more success in your business.

Do You Want to Know More?

What are the Next Steps?

**Make Money Even Faster When You Have a Digital Marketing
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