Prepare for 7 digital marketing megatrends in 2020

By Ashleigh Wainstein

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New tech tools take hold and consumer behaviour moves ever faster towards instant communication and results. Here are seven key trends that will define digital marketing in 2020:

Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

1. Data visualisation will become even more important, particularly the consolidation of all marketing and operational touchpoints into a single dashboard that offers quick visual insights into a business - its performance and relationship with its customers. Data doesn't mean much without the tools used to visualise and analyse it. All business channels - online and offline - have to be integrated into this single view and this can be a challenge, but the rewards are great.

Data visualisation tools provide a view of the customer journey beyond marketing

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2. Artificial intelligence (AI)-powered insights are possible once data has been collected and formatted. AI tools are able to look at much larger datasets than humans and can draw correlations across business events quickly, flagging insights and anomalies. The software picks the trends and then people can unpack these, analyse them and make more informed business decisions.

For example, AI can take 50 marketing channels – billboards, local messaging, Facebook and so on, and can tell you what marketing channels achieve the most with whom and when – the detail is incredible. It interrogates the metrics and can make suggestions and recommend marketing opportunities. These are based on data rather than human assumptions or biases.

3. Local messaging is becoming increasingly significant because local content trumps brand messaging when talking to consumers. It comes down to authenticity and relevance – and technology lets businesses talk to consumers, via many channels, one-to-one. Global brands have long since steered away from big generic messaging.

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We can see how their messaging varies between countries and even within territories. Brands are now identifying that this needs to be taken further, with different branches tailoring their messaging on a community (suburban) level, to suit their individual clients' needs, because every store's customers are different. When it comes to messaging, don't waste your budget - one size does not fit all and brands get three times the customer engagement using local, customised content then they do with blanket messaging.

4. Expectations around reviews are growing among consumers and this is reflected in the growth of near-me searches and review stats – proximity stats have jumped 500% in the last two years and show no signs of slowing. Consumers prefer to interact with a brand digitally instead of through call centres and more than 80% trust online reviews as much as a personal recommendation. They do expect quick responses to any review they give – positive or negative – and companies need to be prepared for this.

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5. Growth of loyalty clubs will accelerate in 2020 as more brands go this route because the data they produce is valuable. Organisations are better able to understand their customers using the data they acquire from their loyalty programmes. It's a win-win situation – brands give customers rewards and as they know more about their customers are able to communicate through the most relevant channel and this, in turn, results in increased loyalty.

6. Marketing automation with personalisation simplifies communication with consumers based on their preferences. Historically, multiple teams were required to create and send targeted messaging. Increasingly sophisticated tools are now able to identify consumers' preferences, as well as which channels they prefer to receive communications on and send intelligent, useful and relevant marketing messages to them.

7. Brands will place less emphasis on"influencers" with a large number of followers - there will be more relevant content being produced by smaller, on-the-ground nano-influencers who are in touch with their immediate community. This ties in with brands moving towards local messaging which is more relevant and authentic for consumers.

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Ashleigh started her career at an ICT company where she became head of operations and helped launch the company's EduSmart platform, enabling educational institutions to maximise their productivity through information technology. In 2013 she co-founded Social Places, a digital MarTech company specialising in location-based marketing and reputation management.

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