

4 Digital Marketing Trends

Posted At : June 3, 2018 2:48 PM | Posted By : Hope Gerber

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1. Chatbots are the new customer experience tool

Chatbots have been around for years, but due to recent AI improvements, they have seen a big lift in popularity. In 2017, the use of chatbots by brands to create more engaging customer experiences started becoming a key marketing tactic. In 2018, chatbots are a key marketing tactic that

brands need to start thinking about using via social media. Currently, chatbots are mostly used for customer service—61% of consumer-chatbot interactions are centered around customer service-related questions...the future of bots is looking bright, too, with an estimated 85% of customer interactions managed by chatbots by 2020 (Hollander, 2017). You might ask, who is the target audience for chatbots? The answer is Millennials. 58% of Millennials have used a chatbot before and 71% say they would try interacting with a chatbot from a major brand, according to a survey by Retale (Retale, 2018). With the Millennial demographic showing interest in this technology, it is only a matter of time before chatbots and other AI technology become an every day norm.

2. Integrating personalization into an omni-channel customer journey

Within e-commerce sectors like travel and retail, website personalization has been widely used to increase relevance and response of communication with returning customers and, most importantly, new customers. There are various forms of website personalization such as increased use of AI as opposed to manual updates, content offered to visitors, and commerce management systems (SaaS) that can help automatically integrate personalization into companies' CRM—integrating a personalization tool with a CRM is the key to a complete omni-channel experience for customers and making personalized experience at every stage of their buying journey, across all platforms they interact with. For example, creating an personalized omni-channel experience would look like this: a customer goes onto company A's website via their laptop computer to look at a pair of shoes, then the next day they are on Facebook and see an ad for those same exact pair of shoes, later in the week, they head to the company A's store and they research those pair of shoes on their mobile device, after they purchase the shoes. Company A is able to provide product recommendations tailored to the type of shoe that person previously purchased. You can expect to see integrated personalized experiences being adopted across more sectors in the coming years.

3. Digital storytelling

Social media stories' growing popularity among users has created a nearly impossible task for marketers to ignore in the coming years. The stories format originally launched by Snapchat and now on Instagram and Facebook has now become a staple of the social media world. Each platform offers unique features and presentation, but

they all follow the same concept—digital storytelling. Stories capture people in the moment and at the best moments day and night and most disappear after a period of time. This temporary nature not only creates great storytelling, but also creates a sense of “fear of missing out” and instant gratification for user. 2018 is the year of digital storytelling, with even YouTube and WhatsApp joining the revolution.

4. Brands heavy investment in influencer marketing

According to Inc.com, 84% of marketers planned on executing at least one influencer marketing campaign during 2017, and businesses generate \$6.50 for every \$1 invested in influencer marketing (Cole, 2017). Brands heavy investment in influencer marketing as a core marketing strategy has started becoming popular over the past few years and will only continue to grow moving forward as more brands start taking notice of the ROI. The type of companies that have the most success from influencer marketing are clothing and beauty brands, and now larger companies, such as Amazon, are also jumping on the bandwagon. What is driving force of influencer marketing? Consumers. Brands that make their customers the star of their user-generated content will increase their brand loyalty and enhance the buyer experience. The perfect example of this is Coca Cola’s Share a Coke campaign. This helps brands create content that is more natural and personal as opposed to being over planned, like some advertising efforts. Nearly 95 percent of marketers who currently use an influencer marketing strategy believe it is effective, and we only expect this number of marketers (and their respective brands) to increase next year.

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