

2020 social trends you need to know

By  Julia Rhodes

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Let's face it. Social media marketing is in a constant state of change and advertising has become more and more challenging.



Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

In the last year, the conversational data around the term 'advertising' has dropped significantly in net sentiment as people no longer want to be sold to. More than [80% of millennials say](#) they don't trust traditional advertising and with that generation owning significant spending power, new disruptive technologies will be needed to shake up marketing strategies.

But it's not all doom and gloom. There is some good news: [80% of brands say](#) that their community-building efforts have resulted in increased traffic. So, despite social media being challenging at times, the time invested in fostering a quality social media community is very worthwhile.

Let's take a look at what's happening in the social media hemisphere.

Rise of niche networks

Social is moving from a mass marketing vehicle back toward a personal, communication-driven approach. A HubSpot [Talkwalker social media trends review](#) says that utilised 50+ industry experts says that "People are no longer looking for large communities, but the relevant ones. Less noise, more genuine engagement."



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We're going dark

It is forecasted that the social media trend for 2020 will be 'Dark Social' - fewer public interactions and more private interactions on dark social channels like Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram DMs and more.

The transforming power of AI

The social media advertising landscape has transformed dramatically in the last two years. A huge part of that transformation is related to developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. “Artificial intelligence was our most discussed trend in H1 2019 with more than 4.7 million mentions.”

Ad targeting matters. Platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google offer data-rich algorithms to target audiences with excellent precision, where doing this manually is unsustainable. By leveraging AI, marketers reach the right audience and understand how consumers react to campaigns and different types of creative.

Thanks to AI, advertisers can optimise targeting tactics in real-time, and tune the overall media delivery based on consumer behaviour.



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So what does this mean for marketers? It's time to adapt! For example, chatbots are a significant investment, offering 24/7 support and managing incoming customer data.

Also, I predict that 'visual search' like GoogleLens will be a major disruptor this coming year. Marketers will have to change and adapt their SEO strategies from their classically textual approach to one that strategically considers visuals.

Lastly, voice search being the next big thing for brands to watch out for with their content strategies.

AR and VR

Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) could be the next big innovations in technology Source: James Bromley on fool.com having integrated into our social media channels and Apps. In 2020, I foresee that AR and VR will be further harnessed by marketers, to boost user experience, and engage audiences via gamification.



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Keeping it human and personal

The use of private groups and communities, messaging apps, and ephemeral 'stories' has risen sharply in the past two years, with many major platforms building their core products around this change in how people now prefer to engage with others in the digital realm.

User-generated content appears to be on the rise with 'authentic' less commercial content often outperforming slicker Photoshop'd creative.

Fall of the macro, rise of the micro

When it comes to influencer marketing, success can be found in large numbers of content reach to target audience segments. In the past, it was thought that macro-influencers give brands the 'best' reach - as they have more followers than their micro-influencer counterparts.

However, marketers are becoming more savvy towards to quality of reach earned by their paid influencers. Just because an influencer has a large reach, doesn't mean that the reach earned by him or her posting, will be the right fit for your target market.

In 2020, I forecast that instead of investing say in one macro influencer with large reach, that brands will rather invest in numerous micro-influencers for a similar combined cost.

The benefits of the micro:

- Focus on more segmented/specific audiences.
- Improve your engagement.
- Decrease risk.
- Ultimately, spend less for potentially better returns.

The rise of video

In 2020, videos will be used beyond raising brand awareness; they'll be used to offer personalised video responses to customers' questions, issues or needs. Receiving customised videos in email inboxes, on messenger, or via pop-up chat boxes will become more common.



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Caring is cool

As for trends I've noticed, brands appear to become more ethical, socially conscious and invested in CSI - and the result of this is positive brand sentiment. Besides, what can go wrong with giving back? So I'm all for it!

Micro-blogs and longer-form content

Take a look at Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn - all of them adding functionality to share longer-form content. Facebook now optimises videos that are over 3 minutes in length for organic reach. These social platforms are now clearly facilitating and rewarding rich, value-add content.

Gone are the days of the multiple short-snippet posts and in are the times of 'less is more' - fewer more in-depth content pieces.

Challenges brands face

The younger market consistently changes the platforms they use. First, it was Snapchat, now TikTok, what is it going to be next? This is and will continue to be a challenge for brands and marketers.

A couple of 2019 highlights

- Instagram hit 1 billion monthly users.
- Sources say there are nearly a billion global active TikTok monthly users.

TikTok!

Yes, this is important so gets its own section! TikTok is a video app where users can share 15 seconds of themselves doing, well, virtually anything! Some of the most common things are lip sync-ing, dancing and comedic skits. Filters, music and animations are all part of the App. Like most social media Apps you can follow your favourites, Like, Comment and Live Stream. On TikTok you can also Re-Post content on other platforms.

Who is using it?

Most users are 24 and under. Major celebrities like American talk show host Jimmy Fallon have jumped on the bandwagon, encouraging fans to participate in the Apps' Challenges feature. In one instance Jimmy Fallon challenged people to jump down to roll like tumbleweeds.

Where did it come from?

Chinese technology company ByteDance purchased musical.ly and rebranded it as TikTok.

Where are the users?

The majority are in China and it is so popular there that it is estimated that nearly 3 in every 10 people have the App! Outside of China, most of them come from the US. Around 2% from Australia. There are currently TikTok users in approximately 150 countries.

Is TikTok used in South Africa?

There aren't official numbers, but there are quite a few uniquely South African hashtags such as #mzansioriginal or #johncenachallenge which is a lovely stream of videos relating to Sho Madjozi's viral song. So there's definitely a local presence to get involved with!



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What kind of content performs well on the platform?

Cringe videos have huge widespread appeal with compilations of painful or embarrassing TikTok clips. Other popular TikTok accounts belong to people doing dance or acrobatic routines racking up millions of views. As well as entertaining content with music and skits.

TikTok is getting massive global traction. In the first half of 2018, it was the no. 1 download in the Google app store worldwide, beating out other well-known social apps including YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook.

TikTok: Looking ahead

Will a career on TikTok be possible? Will it be monetised in the same way as YouTube??



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On YouTube, you can run ads but on TikTok there is a way to make money using the Live Stream feature where viewers can purchase an emoji and send it to their favourite live streamers and the Live streamer can then convert that back into cash.

It's clearly working. Revenue has more than tripled in the past year - now estimated \$4,830,000+. Another revenue stream it recently trialed was a partnership with Guess to run a campaign called #InMyDenim for its first-ever branded content piece in the US.

Paid partnerships with social media influencers are also on the cards. Big brands like Pepsi, Nike and Sony Music are building communities on TikTok, aligning with new influencers to create content and a dedicated brand following.

Who's leveraging the popularity of TikTok?

Facebook is! They have launched a very similar version of the App called Lasso, from play.Google.com.

'Lasso makes it easy for anyone to create and share short videos with fun filters and effects. Follow creators, search hashtags, discover popular viral video trends and join in by putting your own spin on them.

Once you've found a type of video that's trending, whether it's #comedy or #fail, you can use the in-app camera to create your own spin on them with special effects, music, text on video and editing tools that you can use to cut and edit your funny videos. Add hashtags to your video to share it with the world! You can also add your videos directly to your Facebook story.'

It has been seen as Facebook's attempt to lure back their shrinking teenage demographic. The app doesn't have good reviews on the app store, some complaints include slowness of the app and many people feel the app tries to be too much like TikTok.

Something to keep in mind [no pun intended]

The awareness of social media on our mental health is increasing, with National Day of Un-plugging gaining 3,300 mentions in 2019. Social media addiction is now a recognised addiction, changing the perception of the social media landscape. People are becoming aware of how social media impacts their mental health are taking steps to reduce time spent trolling social channels.



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The good news is that statistics show us that people aren't moving away from social media altogether, but rather managing their time on it more efficiently.

So make 2020 the year to stop fearing AI, and instead, engage it in your marketing strategy to maximise your brand's potential.

Because viewers are endeavouring to spend less time on social media means that content producers need to ensure the posts share are worthwhile and a value-add to consumers. Focus on quality messaging over quantity.

In conclusion

Take advantage of dark social channels like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Telegram and WeChat. After all, 'Dark Social' is the top referral channel, so let's leverage it!

Velvet-roped social is the way to go. Private communities, invite-only social spaces. People want to spend time with people more like them. The number one trend this year will be hyper-personalisation and hyper-targeting. Content will be tailored to more specific, relevant topics.

Do more with less. You don't need to jump on the bandwagon of every new fad, including TikTok. It's important to go back to the WHY. What are you trying to achieve and what is the best way to tell that story?

Video will remain the main player. Keep video content in your content plans and don't shy away from videos over 3 minutes in length.

Create trust. Social media has suffered a trust issue in the last few years due to data privacy concerns and disinformation. In 2020, a big trend will be brands and platforms working hard to counteract the distrust perceived in social media.

With the ongoing privacy concerns we aren't inclined to share everything in open forums anymore, so messaging will start to play an important role in how brands communicate.

There you have it. The future is in the hands of those who create community-focused content that brings practical value and generates conversations. We must take a human-first approach to social media marketing and focus on how we solve real-world problems for our consumers and create experiences that change their lives in meaningful, positive ways.

ABOUT JULIA RHODES

She is most known for skillfully marrying viral capacity video content with social media ads to generate mass amounts of reach...

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