

Online Marketing Trends 2018



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Get on board with these 2018 digital marketing trends

The dawn of the new year brings with it the newest digital marketing trends to make businesses work at maximum efficiency. I personally believe that strategizing a digital approach is the best way to get the most bang for your advertising budget. One of the biggest challenges we see with folks is the ability to connect the marketing together and to understand the big-picture goals and the micro-goals needed to get there - and setting up a strategy to measure success.

Technology evolves so quickly that it's easy to see a large fragmentation of how to market to people. Even if you throw marketing dollars at every avenue out there, the audience you reach through those more fragmented channels don't give you a return on investment. At the end of the day, you must decide who you're most valuable audience is and how to market to them.



WHO IS YOUR MOST VALUABLE AUDIENCE? YOUR DIGITAL STRATEGY SHOULD LEAD THEM DIRECTLY TO YOU.

2018 Digital Trends – Content Marketing, Video & Digital Display: An Overview

CONTENT MARKETING

Part of decoding that audience begins with how to tell the right story of your business. I'm a huge believer that it all starts with your story: what makes your story, what makes your mission. The reality is you have to realize what is special about your business, figure out that story and then decide who it speaks to.

Effective content marketing is based on relevant, interesting information. Many times that means it's less about what the business is and more about what people care about. We're having to be more creative and understand distribution channels that are outside of the norm. People are using Facebook as their news feed now. This means I can't always

put content in your traditional placements; I have to be proactive. And the thing is, it's so targetable.

By setting up messaging and tactics that better fit the channels your audience uses, you can find a way to be most effective. People often ask me what makes us a marketing company they should partner with through advertising. We have the best tools and technology and the people who know what they're doing. We learn from all the mistakes we make. Sometimes we don't know what's going to work until you see it not work. That trial and error methodology is key in all advertising campaigns.

A person is walking away from the camera down a long, brightly lit tunnel. The walls of the tunnel are illuminated with vibrant, multi-colored lights (purple, pink, blue, green, yellow) that create a rainbow-like effect. The floor is dark and reflective. The person is wearing dark clothing and carrying a bag.

WHAT IS YOUR STORY AND WHO DOES IT SPEAK TO?

A pet peeve of mine is when people say they want to run a test campaign. There's no such thing as a non-test campaign. You need to take everything you do and learn from it.

VIDEO MARKETING

Smart business don't have a television budget, they have a video budget. It's difficult to pull the plug and say 'I'm not going to show up in the second block of the 10 p.m. news and pull an ad because there's comfort in seeing it.' But if you're the only captive audience because you're tuning in to see, how effective is it really?

But before a business goes digital-only, content consideration is key. An ad on the 10 p.m. news is a generic ad that speaks to everybody; you can't speak to a specific audience. You really have to reconsider how you're creating your video content. This is how it goes back to the segments or personas you've identified.

DIGITAL DISPLAY MARKETING

Click-through rates aren't the end-all, be-all with digital display marketing. Most of the time your goal with a display campaign is to get exposure and visibility to the right audience. That strategy is going to the top of the funnel: »

A woman with dark hair and round glasses is shown in profile, looking towards the right. The background is a vibrant, out-of-focus neon sign with the word "BYE" visible in large, glowing letters. The lighting is a mix of red and blue, creating a modern, digital atmosphere.

**LOOKING FOR A
CAPTIVE AUDIENCE?
CHOOSE VIDEO
MARKETING OVER TV.**



the people who didn't know you exist. The number one goal is visibility.

One of the biggest trends around digital display is aligning with quality and reputable high-performing news and information. There's a million websites out there where you can place ads, but aligning with content that is quality should be a concern for a lot of folks. There's a value in being seen on relevant and quality sites that elevate your brand.

Placing direct ad buys on sites with quality inventory allow clients to create more specific, creative campaigns as opposed to traditional, programmatic ad buys. If you want vanilla ice cream, programmatic is great. If you want to add in some nuts and sprinkles and stuff, working with a company that knows how great digital marketing works is the way to go.

That's my two cents on some of the biggest online marketing trends for 2018. Now let's get more in depth with these topics, shall we?



KYLE STICHTENOTH

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Digital Display Trends – Where did all the cookies go?

Since the mid 90's, using cookies to target audiences has been a staple in digital advertising. As your New Year's resolution kicks off, not only will you see fewer cookies, but so will your advertising. While the nature of cookies and how they're used is changing, marketers will still be able to put your brand in front of the right audience – with more accuracy and better results than ever before.

BESIDES SNACKING, WHAT ARE COOKIES FOR?

Cookies are small text files that are downloaded on your browser as you visit different websites. Cookies remember your preferences on websites, like what local news you read on AL.com or which city's weather you check on Weather.com. They also track when and where you saw an ad and whether you clicked. Cookies revolutionized digital advertising by allowing advertisers to take advantage of online data to reach individuals based on location, demographics, and behaviors.

WHY ARE COOKIES CHANGING?

Cookies work differently depending on the device, app, and mobile web browser. Because mobile apps can't share information with each other or with a mobile web browser, cookies are less effective on mobile than with traditional web browsing. As technology increasingly becomes dominated by smartphones and tablets, traditional cookies are becoming less relevant and the rise of other targeting technologies will become more widespread in 2018.

What to expect in 2018 and beyond

1. UNIQUE DEVICE ID TARGETING

This type of cookieless targeting is standard practice for location-based targeting like geo-fencing. Expect Unique Device ID targeting to grow in use and capability and adopt more sophisticated targeting options. Due to their hyper-local relevance, unique device ID targeted ads often receive higher response rates than traditional display ads. If you're next to a coffee shop and receive an ad about a new beverage, wouldn't you be more likely to visit the coffee shop than if you received the ad while at home?

2. ENVIRONMENT TARGETING

Where will you find sports fans? In the sports section. This type of logic has remained relevant for events, newspapers, websites, and most recently, apps. With or without traditional cookies, classic advertising methods aren't going anywhere. App and Devicespecific targeting, as well as fixed ad units on specific site pages will increase in 2018.

3. DATA'S REIGN AS KING CONTINUES

Data is currency, so information that is uniquely collected by websites (First-Party Data) will remain invaluable. In 2018, expect an increase in targeting based on a universal login (like how you log in to Spotify or Snapchat using Facebook). Also expect selfidentifying data to have a resurgence. Though you may not realize it, when you visit websites like AL.com, you often set your location, and read articles, and take actions to identify location and interests.

As we venture into 2018 and beyond, your body and your advertising will be healthier with fewer cookies. Advances in precision targeting will make ads more relevant for customers, contributing to higher engagement and response rates for advertisers. The future is bright, so go have a cookie... while you still can.





USING DIGITAL DISPLAY TO DRIVE TRAFFIC TOWARD CONTENT RESULTS IN TWICE AS MANY CLICKS.

Content Marketing Trends

Content Marketing is going to be as strong as ever in 2018 – but with a twist. Strong content principles still apply: targeted, compelling, relevant content written for each persona at each different stage of the buying cycle.

That said, how we get the content TO our consumers is going to be the major pulloff from 2017. No more "if you write it, they will come" SEO strategies. Today's consumer is being pulled in more directions than ever, and even the most cleverly crafted thought leadership piece is fighting for attention with about a million other marketing strategies. Preparing a strong campaign for HOW this content will be consumed is at the forefront of 2018 marketing strategies.

Here are just a couple of examples of how marketers will need to focus their investments in 2018 toward making sure people read their content:

TRADITIONAL DIGITAL DISPLAY

Using digital display creative to drive traffic toward an article as opposed to driving it toward a quick call-to-action ("call now") has become the latest trend in digital display advertising that effectively drives traffic to your well-crafted content. Our research is showing that digital display ads »

pointed at content versus pointed at quick calls-to-action drive almost twice as many clicks, confirming the fact that today's consumer wants to be educated, nurtured, and wooed by their advertisers.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Leveraging the "halo effect" of respected publishers by promoting your content on their sites usually ensures a higher click-thru-rate, and a longer engagement with your content.

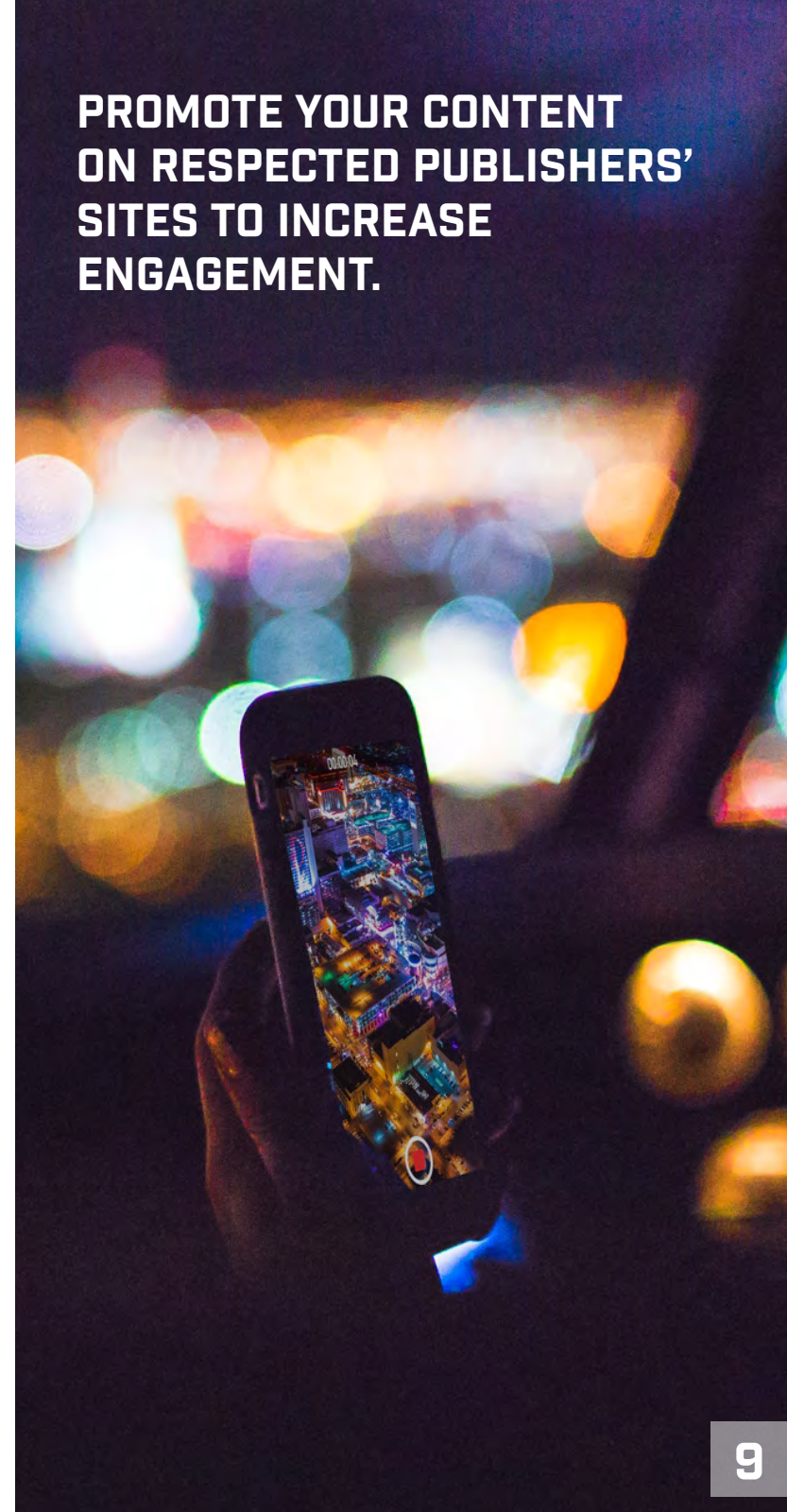
FACEBOOK ADVERTISING

Facebook ads targeting prospects who will read your content is an attractive option for many reasons. First of all, it's – well – FACEBOOK. 214 million users in the U.S. confirms that the audience is there. And its many different demographic targeting capabilities ensures that you can get your content in front of virtually anyone.

CONTENT RECOMMENDATION ENGINES

Tools like Taboola and Outbrain partner with major online content publishers to suggest content they think their readers will want to consume. These tools are by and large CPM based, so you're essentially bidding on contextual consumption to drive your rate toward getting qualified prospects to click on and consume your content.

**PROMOTE YOUR CONTENT
ON RESPECTED PUBLISHERS'
SITES TO INCREASE
ENGAGEMENT.**



Video Marketing Trends

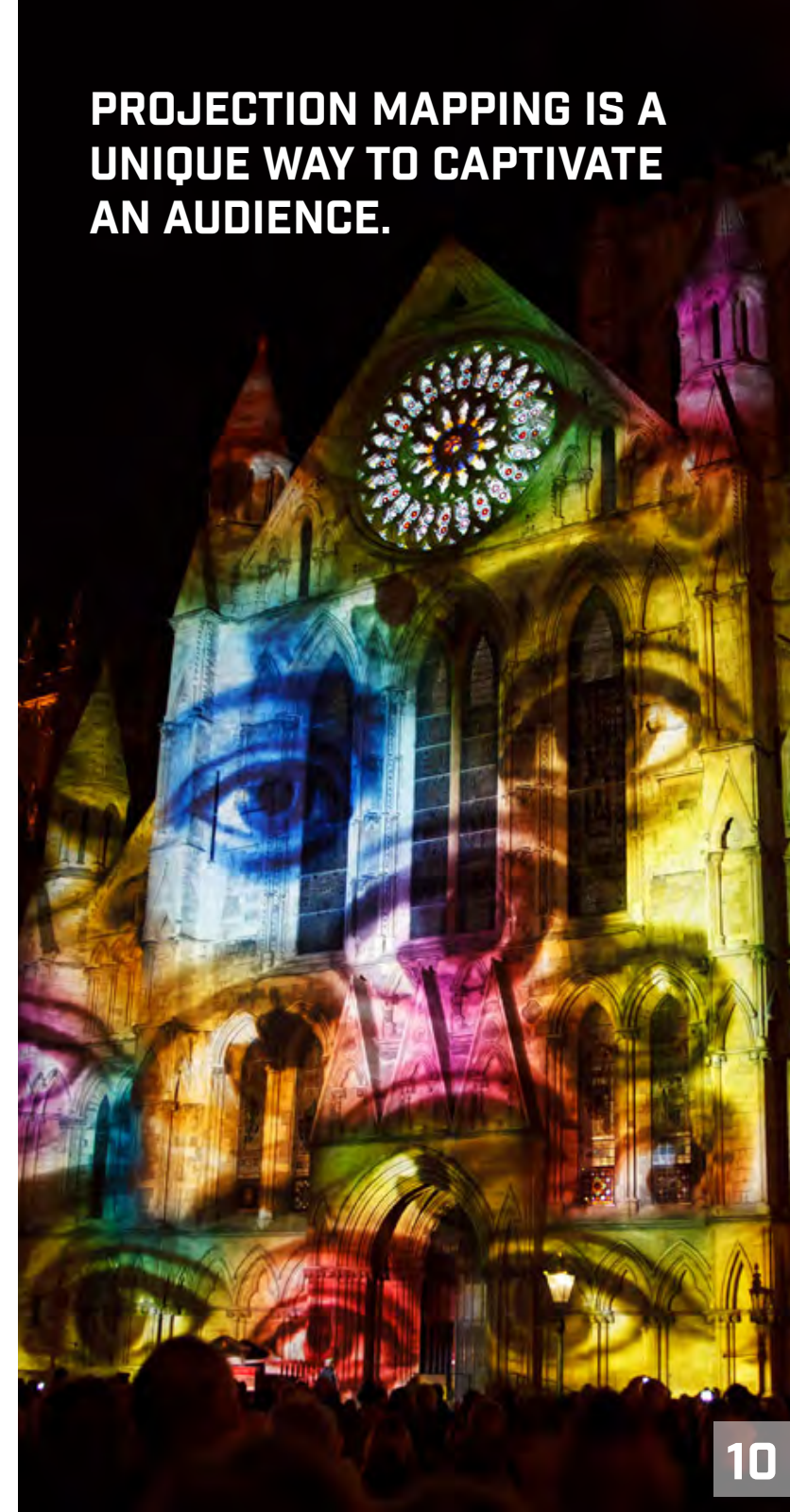
If you don't have a video strategy, you're missing out. In today's oversaturated digital landscape, most of us don't possess the dedicated attention span to read lengthy articles and posts. Nevertheless, you'll still have your purists who still love magazines and newspapers, and those people will still consume everything. But you also have a generation of people who have grown up not reading and if you don't have your story in a video, you're missing an audience. The dawn of Facebook video has made having a video plan accessible for all budgets and businesses.

As we turn the page to 2018, there are several video marketing trends we see in the forecast:

PROJECTION MAPPING

With the power of video projection mapping, a video can be projected onto a 3D surface. According to projection-mapping.org, projection mapping uses everyday video projectors, but instead of using a flat screen, light is mapped onto any surface, turning common objects of any 3D shape into interactive displays. Projection mapping has been used for product launches, opening events, industry conferences etc. by brands who wish to captivate an audience in a unique way. We see the utilization of projection mapping really taking off next year.

**PROJECTION MAPPING IS A
UNIQUE WAY TO CAPTIVATE
AN AUDIENCE.**



**VR VIDEO MARKETING
ALLOWS CONSUMERS
TO FULLY IMMERSE
THEMSELVES IN A
PRODUCT OR SERVICE.**



LIVE STREAMING

Live streaming is nothing new but has gained immense popularity in 2017. Anyone who uses live streaming can show their followers what they're doing in real time. Public figures often use live streaming to crowdsource content and ideas from their fans. As more and more social channels have begun to adopt this form of video as well as developers who have begun to create apps solely dedicated to live streaming, we predict it to take off even more in 2018.

VIRTUAL REALITY (VR) VIDEO MARKETING

Virtual reality is a technology everyone has probably at least heard of at some point but has struggled to gain traction due to its expensive nature. In order for companies to reach their audience through VR, they must first convince them to put on a pair of goggles and step into the virtual world in the first place. While this requires more buy-in from consumers compared to simply glancing at an ad in the digital and/or real world, it also allows them to fully immerse themselves in a product or service. Because there are limited examples of effectiveness of this technology, it is hard to predict just how prevalent VR will become in the next year, but with some of the biggest tech companies investing billions into the VR race, we can say that we will know far more about VR video marketing by the end of next year.

360 VIDEOS

360 video allows viewers to control their perspective from all angles, either from a VR headset or a device screen's browser control. 360 video has obvious implications for tourism locations and ecommerce but can be used in any way marketers can apply it to their brand. Google has run its own test on 360 video and found that it isn't as readily viewed as standard video content but when it is viewed, click thru-rates are higher. 360 video also gained more views, shares and subscribers. Because they allow for a different viewing experience, 360 videos are likely to become an important engagement tool in 2018.



360 VIDEO ALLOWS VIEWERS TO CONTROL THEIR PERSPECTIVE FROM ALL ANGLES.

About / Contact Us

We hope these topics allow you to cut through the noise and stay focused on supporting your business goals with an integrated marketing approach in 2018. Interested in learning more? We'd love to collaborate with you to develop a successful marketing plan. Contact your Alabama Media Group marketing specialist at advertise@al.com

ABOUT AMG:

Alabama Media Group is a digital media company that operates AL.com, one of the country's largest local websites, produces television and video programming, and publishes Alabama's three most prominent newspapers: The Birmingham News, The Huntsville Times and Mobile's Press-Register, as well as Birmingham magazine and The Mississippi Press. The company also offers digital marketing solutions — including audience targeting, search engine marketing and social media optimization; plus creative services, data analytics and event sponsorships. Alabama Media Group is part of Advance Local, a leading media company comprised of 12 local affiliated news and information websites that rank #1 among local media in their respective markets and more than 30 affiliated newspapers known for their award-winning journalism. Advance Local is part of Advance Publications, along with Condé Nast and American City Business Journals.