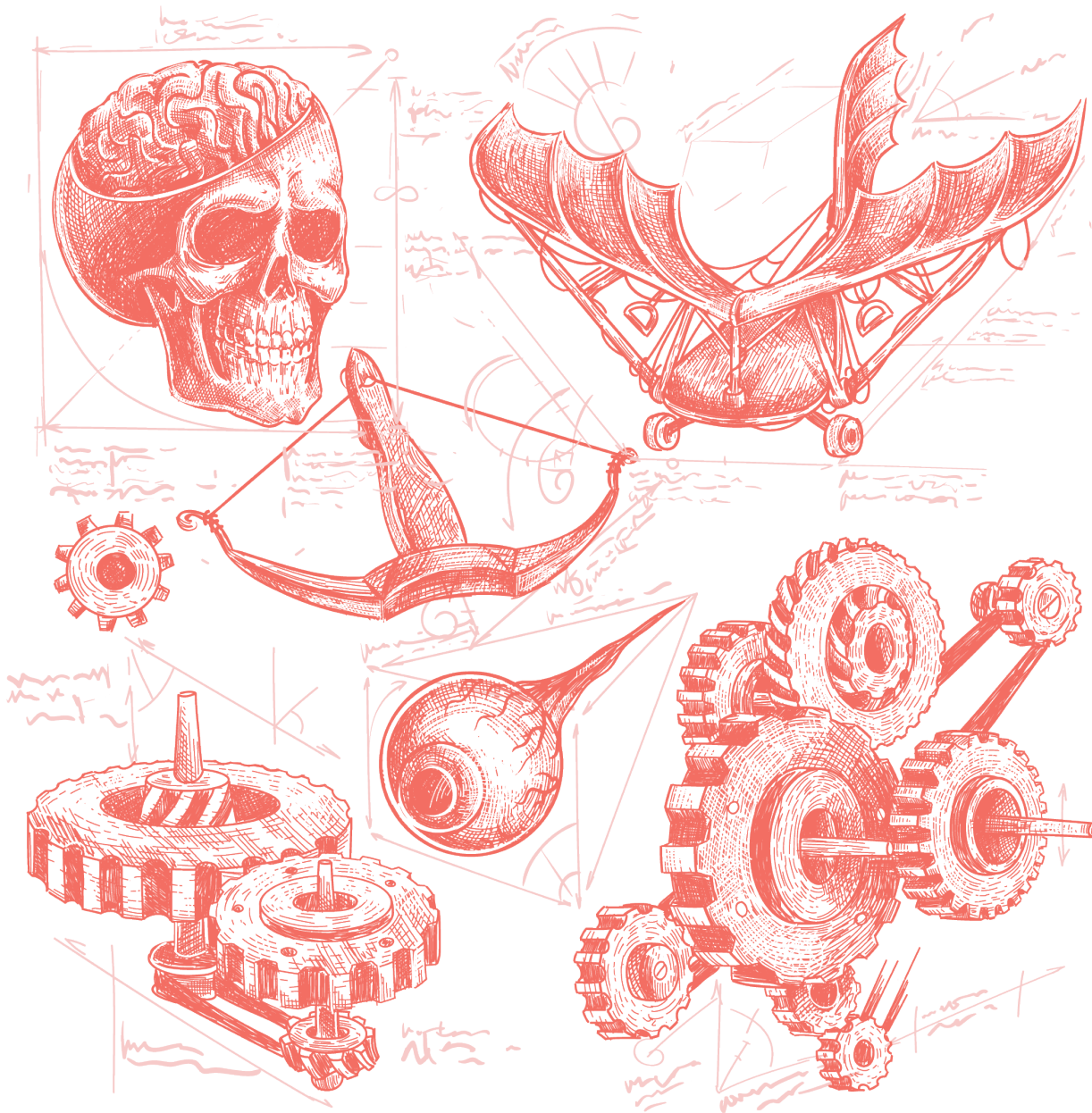


A woman with dark hair, wearing a grey tank top and a dark cardigan, is pointing at a whiteboard in a meeting. The whiteboard has various diagrams and sticky notes. Other people are visible in the background, some looking at the whiteboard. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an office or conference room environment.

# 2019 MARKETING TRENDS

What Every Marketer Should Know

ALABAMA  
MEDIA GROUP



Continuing to find ways to innovate in marketing is nothing new. With every new year comes new business goals and objectives and building a compelling and effective marketing program to support those initiatives is never far behind. This guide will give you a snapshot of what's trending in marketing for 2019, entry points for innovation, and tactics to consider as part of your overall marketing mix.

### BUZZWORDS FOR 2019? LOOK NO FURTHER.

- **Transparency & Authenticity**
- **Personalization**
- **Video Marketing** (More than pre-, mid- and post-roll)
- **Influencer Marketing** (Beyond Beyoncé and the Kardashians)
- **Social Messaging Apps**
- **The New Search**
- **Social Media Stories**

An aerial photograph of a person on a red and white paddleboard in clear, turquoise water. The person is wearing a dark swimsuit and is using a paddle. The water is very clear, showing some darker patches of seabed or rocks. The overall scene is bright and vibrant.

## TRANSPARENCY & AUTHENTICITY

It's no secret that consumers don't trust ads. 59% of surveyed adults said they dislike ads in online video clips, 42% said they dislike ads on websites.<sup>1</sup> As engagement with digital ads goes down, the value of more engaging, consumer-centric content grows. 2019 will bring with it an increase in advertiser spending on content marketing and

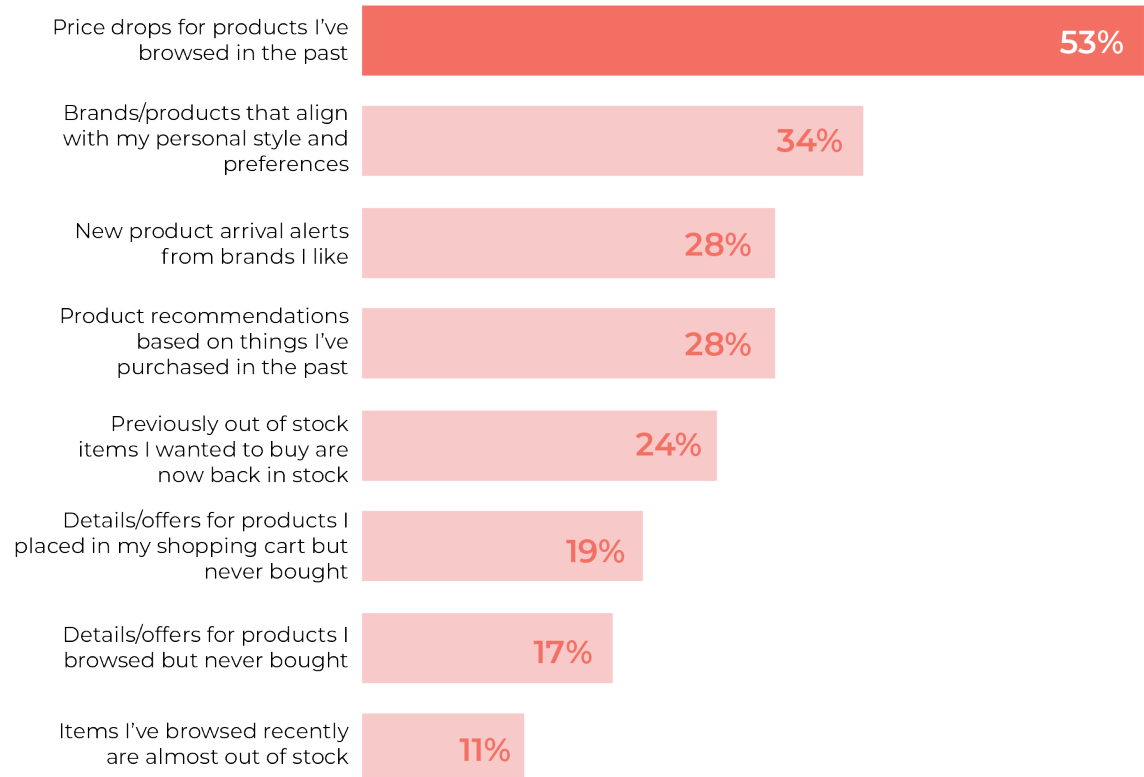
influencer marketing – both of which stand to deliver real value to audiences. While the right marketing mix will continue to include traditional media – both print and digital – consumers are demanding that click-thru's and calls-to-action lead to content they find both relevant and engaging.

## PERSONALIZATION

At their core, personalization and customization mean taking any data you have on customers and combining it with whatever business assets you're promoting to create a message for a hyper-specific segment. For example, not simply targeting women with children aged 7-10, but targeting working women with school-aged children in a major metro area with an interest in running their household from their phone.

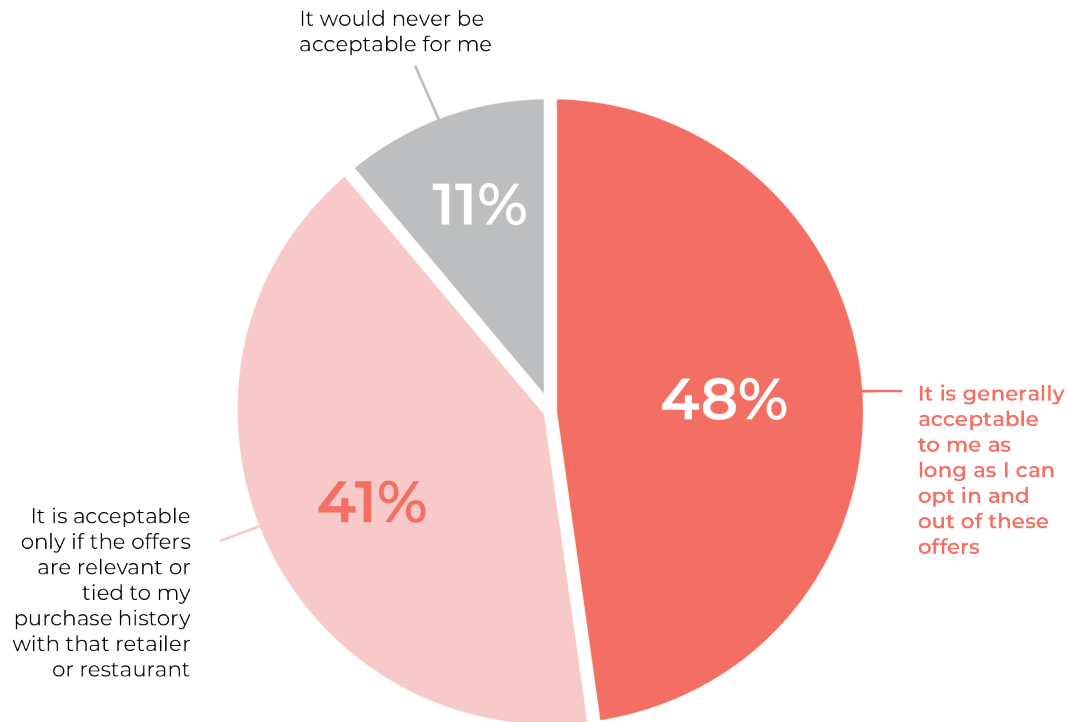
Companies are getting smarter by using better personalization and customization in their marketing campaigns – whether it's through email marketing or by utilizing purchase history to target customers with brands and products they may be interested in based on past purchases or search history. While seemingly a little “big brother” to many, research shows that consumers actually prefer personalized content. Surveys show that email recipients want emails from brands to be personalized.<sup>2</sup> 53% said they'd be interested in price drops for products they've browsed in the past, and 34% said brands and products that align with their personal style and preferences would be major motivators in interacting further with a retailer.

### What e-mail content would entice you to interact further with a retailer?



Sources: Magnetic; Retail TouchPoints © Statista 2018  
Additional Information: Canada; United States; Magnetic; Retail TouchPoints;  
September 2016; 200 consumers and 100 retail executives

## Consumer attitude towards companies using their purchase history for shopping recommendations sent to mobile phones in the United States as of December 2017



Sources: Worldpay; Socratic Technologies © Statista 2018  
Additional Information: United States; Socratic Technologies; December 2017; 200 respondents; 25 years and older

And as for “big brother,” the news isn’t too grim. 48% of consumer respondents surveyed said it was generally acceptable to them for companies to use their purchase history for shopping recommendations, so long as they had the ability to opt out.<sup>3</sup>

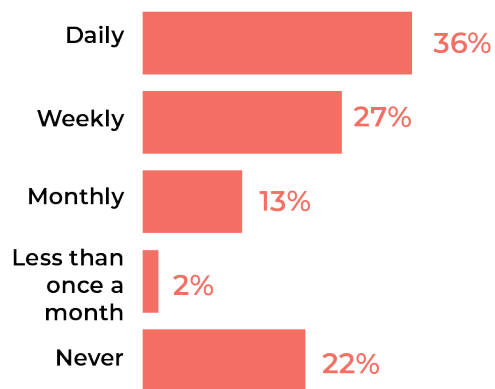
The business case for personalization is undeniable. Of those marketers worldwide who responded, 63% cited an increase in conversions as the main benefit of personalizing marketing tactics. And the most effective personalization tactic according to surveyed marketing executives was dynamic content in email marketing.<sup>4</sup>

## VIDEO MARKETING & ORIGINAL VIDEO CONTENT

If you're considering where to invest your marketing dollars in 2019, look no further than video. Digital video ad spending increased dramatically from 2017 to 2018, and those numbers are expected to grow through 2021.<sup>5</sup>

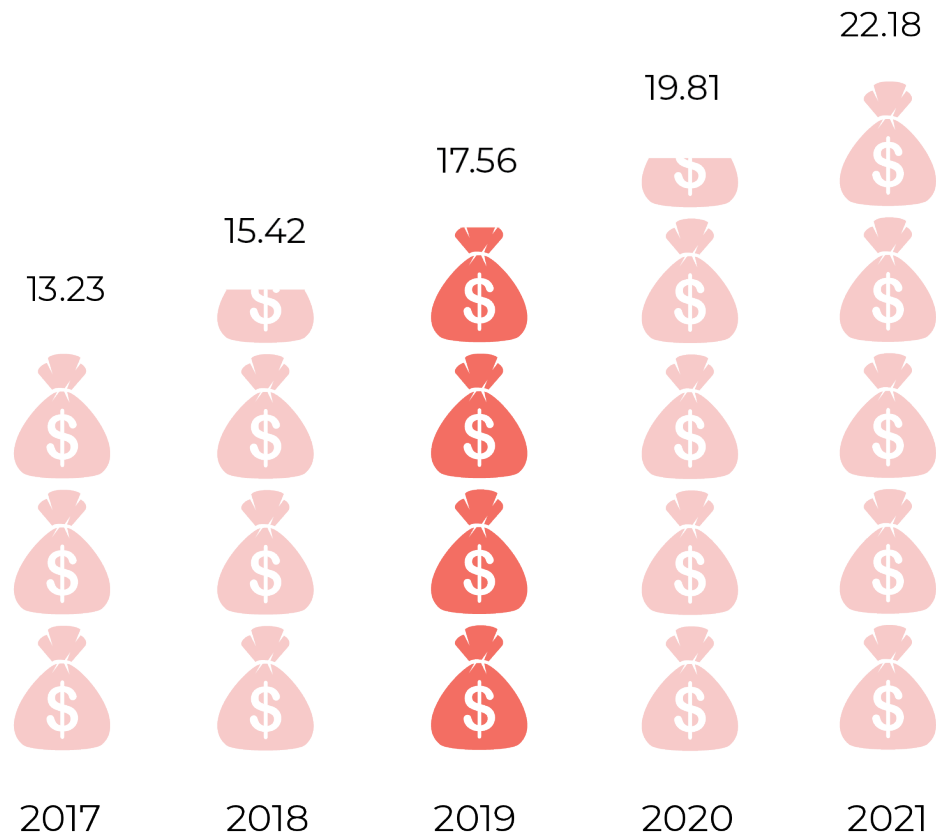
Correlating to that increase in spend is the increase in consumed video content. 36% of users are consuming video content daily. And more than 50% of consumers surveyed are consuming video at least once a week. As consumption increases, so must a brand's presence in that space.

### Frequency of internet users in the United States watching online video in 2016



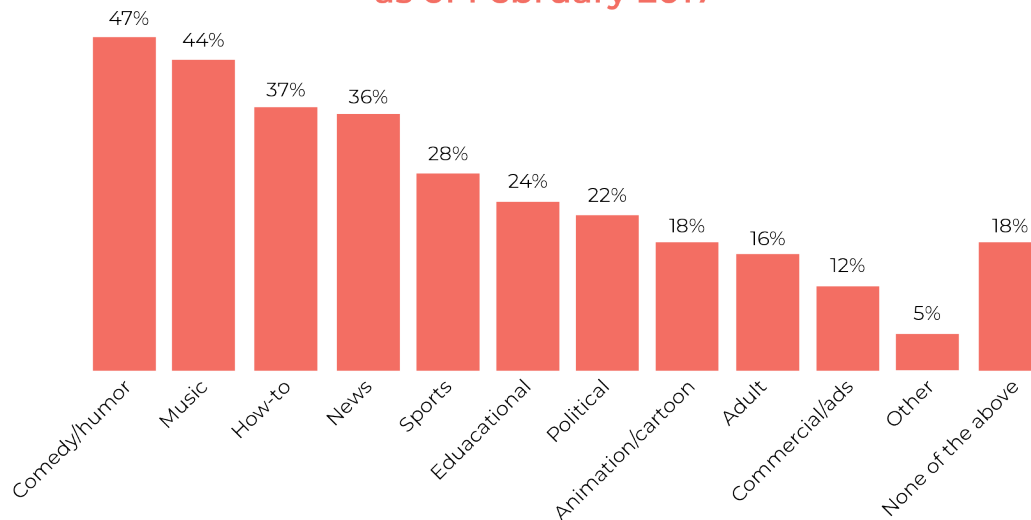
Sources: Google; TNS Infratest © Statista 2018  
 Additional Information: United States; TNS Infratest; Google; January to March 2016; 678 respondents; inter

### Digital video advertising spending in the United States from 2017 to 2021 (in billion U.S. dollars)



Source: eMarketer © Statista 2018  
 Additional Information: United States; 2016; all figures are estimates

## Most popular online video categories in the United States as of February 2017



Source Statista Survey © Statista 2018  
Additional Information: United States: Statista Survey: February 2 to 8, 2017: 1455 respondents: 18 years

Wondering what kind of content they're consuming? Funny is first. Our own social brands are exploding. Check out: [It's a Southern Thing](#)<sup>6</sup>, [SEC Shorts](#)<sup>7</sup>, and [So True Y'all](#)<sup>8</sup>. Rather than interrupting videos with pre-, mid- and post-roll, brands are effectively accessing the audience as a part of the show through exclusive video sponsorships inclusive of video title cards and watermark logos.

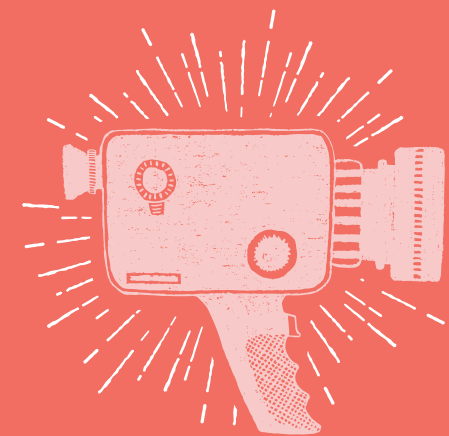
If you're not yet convinced of the power of video, consider these points<sup>9</sup> – whether you're a major brand, an e-commerce site, a software

developer, or a small business owner – the impact of video crosses all industries:

- 70% of consumers say that they have shared a brand's video
- 72% of businesses say video has improved their conversion rate
- 52% of consumers say that watching product videos makes them more confident in online purchase decisions
- 65% of executives visit the marketer's website and 39% call a vendor after viewing a video

If you can't afford to hire professionals to craft your content, here are four online video trends to adopt<sup>10</sup>:

1. Videos should vary in length based on your goals.
2. Don't forget the call-to-action – whether a click-thru to site content, a prompt to watch another video, or a discount code. Make view-thru count.
3. Consider talk-style videos when you want to evoke emotion or explain something with more depth.
4. Ask Me Anything (AMA) style video events where a noted figure from the business takes questions from a "Town Hall" style group of users – this could be ideal for a company trying to hire new employees.



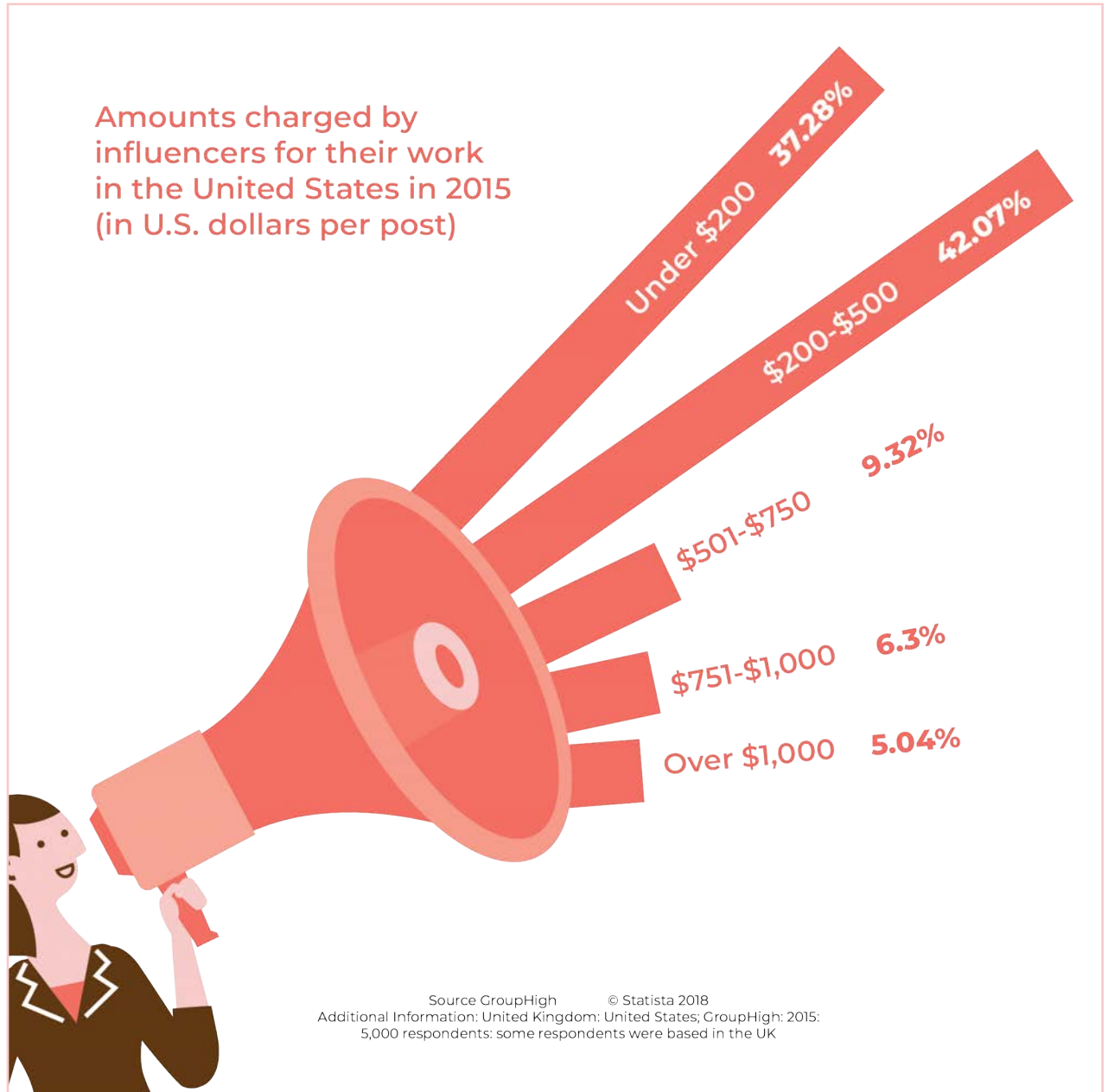
## INFLUENCER MARKETING

An influencer is someone who can help improve brand advocacy, expand awareness, increase share of voice, manage reputation, and drive lead generation. Bottom line, influencers can help brands make big strides as illustrated by a 2017 survey citing 75% of influencer content performed at or better than brand-produced content.<sup>11</sup>

Who are the influencers in your industry? (Keep in mind, most brands can't afford a Kardashian.) But if you're looking for a way to try out influencer marketing there are plenty of influencers you can access for free, or at a minimum, less than \$200 / post.

Not in your budget? No problem. Consider how you're cultivating your fan base through your existing social channels. Instead of a single influencer, how about a network of influencers? If they've liked you or shared you, they're already bought in.

Or consider how you can utilize employees or customers. Major brands like Macy's are foregoing professional models for their own employees.<sup>12</sup> For small businesses, consider your best customers – is there a short video or profile you could put together that tells the story of their experience with your product far better than you could tell the story? Take care of those most loyal to your business by

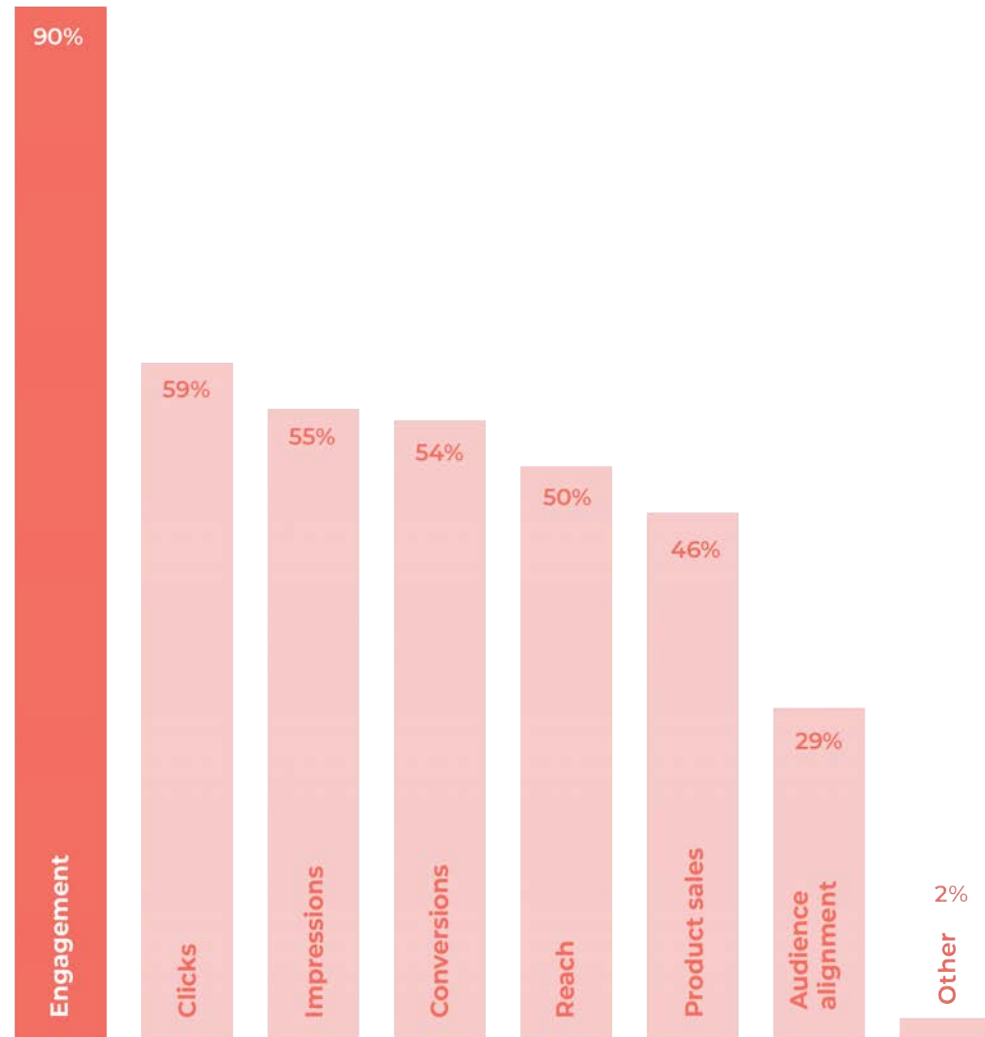




sharing exclusive opportunities, new products, and by giving incentives to post about your products. You can also treat them with special classifications and exclusive discounts.

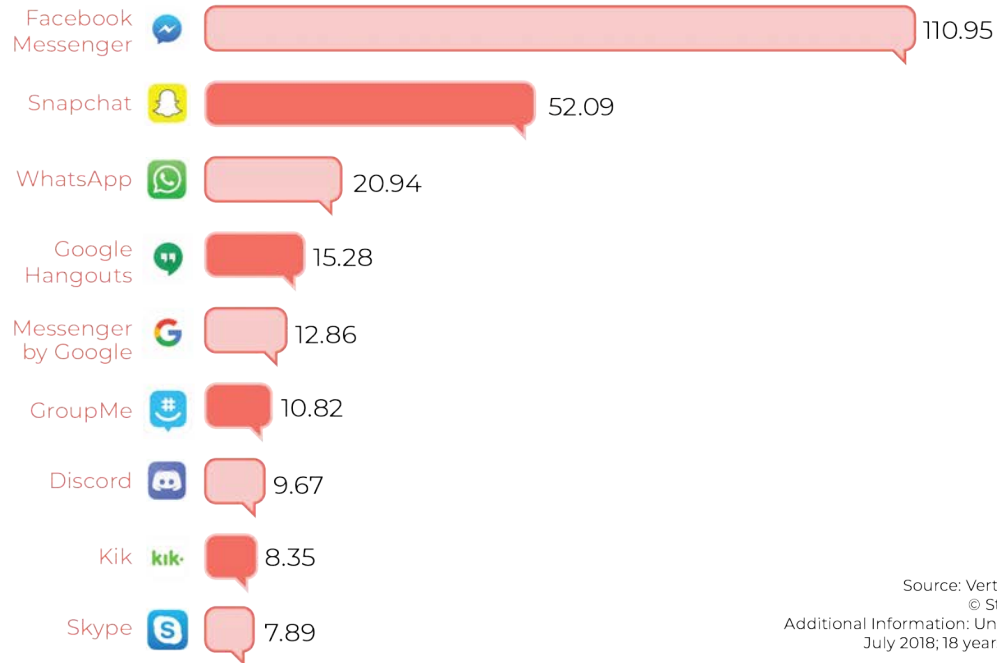
Wondering how to measure influencer effectiveness? Decide what matters most for your business. Marketers are using everything from engagement to actual sales. Giving influencers unique deal codes, UTM codes on digital posts and custom landing pages can help you track which personality is driving the best metrics.

### Leading methods of measuring influencer marketing success according to marketers in the United States as of November 2017



Source: Unqia © Statista 2018 Additional Information: Worldwide: Unqia: October and November 2017: 181 marketers

## Most popular mobile messaging apps in the United States as of July 2018, by monthly active users (in millions)



Source: Verto Analytics  
© Statista 2018  
Additional Information: United States;  
July 2018; 18 years and older

## SOCIAL MESSAGING APPS

The use of social messaging apps like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp extends beyond what you see in your newsfeed. Have you been invited to join a group, share a post or buy an overnight repair serum for puffy eyes? Then you've experienced this approach first-hand.

By app, Facebook Messenger, Snapchat and

WhatsApp take the lead on media usage. Messenger apps allow for personalization, which combines more than one marketing trend when considering your 2019 marketing approach. Whether you're sending automated messages to your followers en masse or customizing your pitch for a 1:1 approach, people are hanging out on messenger apps, so you may as well meet them there.



### Messenger apps are good for:

- **Customer service** – giving people ready access to real people through messaging apps is a great way to provide low-touch, real-time responses to customer service concerns.
- **Direct sales** – using your existing audience to impact 1-to-1 sales options is smart, especially if you're limited by no brick-and-mortar outlet.
- **Content marketing** – Messaging apps provide a hand-held way for you and your customers to share information back and forth with ease – from video reviews, to products endorsements, to testimonials.

## THE NEW SEARCH: VOICE

No longer your average PPC, search has exploded beyond the written word or phrase and is morphing into both visual and voice search. We know that customers expect you to be where they're searching – and with the advent of voice and visual search – it's time to ask yourself if you're staying relevant in the “new” search space.

Understanding the nuances of voice search and implementing them into your marketing strategy will pay dividends in the long-run. How many times have you gotten in the car and asked Alexa to answer a question, only to find you don't have an Alexa device in the car? Some things to consider:

- ComScore estimates that close to 50% of all searches will be made through voice in 2020
- Almost 1/3 of the 3.5 billion searches performed on Google every day are voice searches<sup>13</sup>
- Almost 38% of people in the U.S. are expected to own a voice-search capable device by the end of 2018<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, you can't afford to not have a voice search strategy in place. Voice-powered commerce accounted for \$1.8 billion in U.S. retail revenues in 2017. This figure is expected to reach \$40 billion by 2022.<sup>15</sup>

Wondering how to adopt a voice search as a part of your marketing efforts? Consider your current search strategy. SEO-friendly sites, for the most part, will be voice search friendly, but there are a few things marketers can do to take advantage of the growing popularity of voice search<sup>16</sup>:

- Use natural speech
- Try long-tail keywords
- Exploit the power of “near me search” and make it a part of your paid search strategy
- In the future, consider that you'll also be bidding on voice queries as part of your search buy
- Pay attention to the way you use your own smartphone and speaker when asking Alexa, Siri or Google; apply that real-time approach to your marketing strategy

After you've conquered your voice search strategy, it's time to consider your visual search / search by image strategy.

Tools like Google Lens and Pinterest Lens provide a visual search function that uses machine vision, along with AI to detect real-world objects and offer suggestions for related items.<sup>17</sup> Love an outfit? Take a picture through one of Google's Lens-approved apps like Google photos, and get suggestions for products that are similar, if not identical to your shot. The technology, though relatively young, is growing by leaps and bounds.

## THE NEW SEARCH: VISUAL

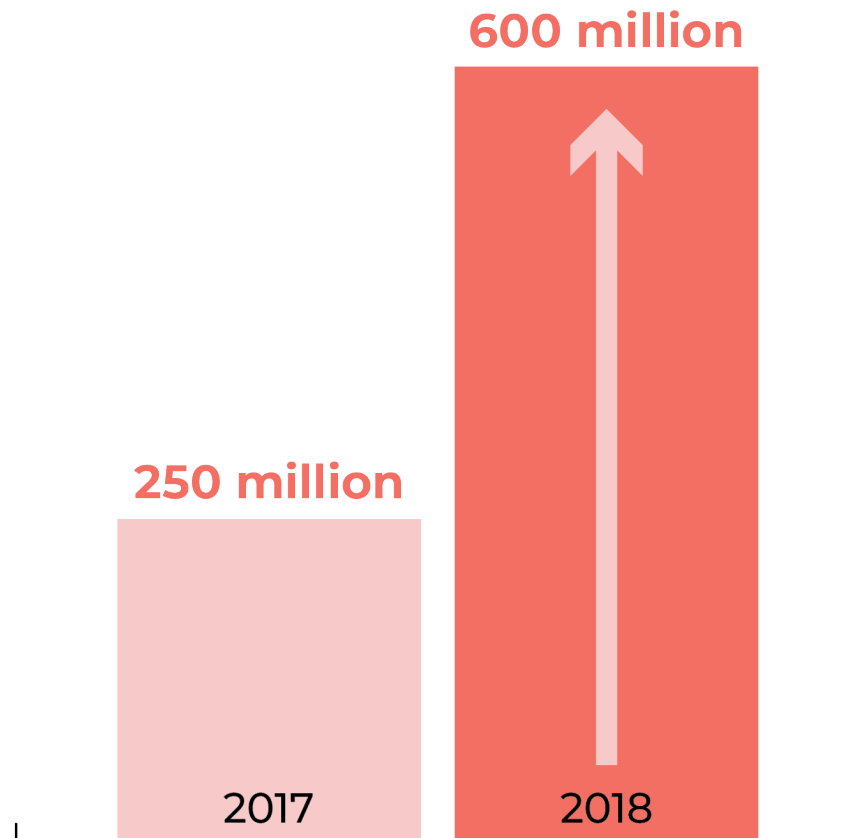
Visual search allows for instant gratification where voice search may not. Whether you want to identify a species of flower or a historic monument, confirmation of the photographed item is instant. The scalability for any number of businesses is evident – imagine being able to do a visual search for a handbag you love, a hat you covet, or the bay-front condo of your dreams?

For marketers, especially those with e-commerce platforms, consider how your digital marketing campaigns can benefit from visual search by introducing products in an interactive way. A retailer might better maximize on search data by analyzing specific elements of a visually searched item like a sofa – whether the pattern, shape or colors in it – as opposed to what a Google word search might provide (i.e. brown sofas). Visual search allows for a much more authentic – and closer to the mark – experience. Layer in AI and you can suggest wall coverings, lamps and rugs that will go with the sofa. The possibilities are endless.

Gartner predicts that brands that are early adopters of both voice and visual search stand to increase their digital commerce revenue by 30%.<sup>18</sup> Can you afford not to be an early adopter?



Number of visual searches performed using Pinterest Lens by users worldwide in February 2017 and February 2018 (in millions of searches)



Sources eMarketer; Pinterest © Statista 2018  
Additional Information: Worldwide; Pinterest; February 8, 2018

Pinterest Lens celebrated one year of their Lens technology in early 2018 and reported their top visual search categories and items<sup>19</sup> (see right).

Visual search is still in its infancy, so if you want to dig deeper into how you can best prepare your website and ecommerce platform to be ready check out the Google Products Guide Blog covering Google Lens.<sup>20</sup>

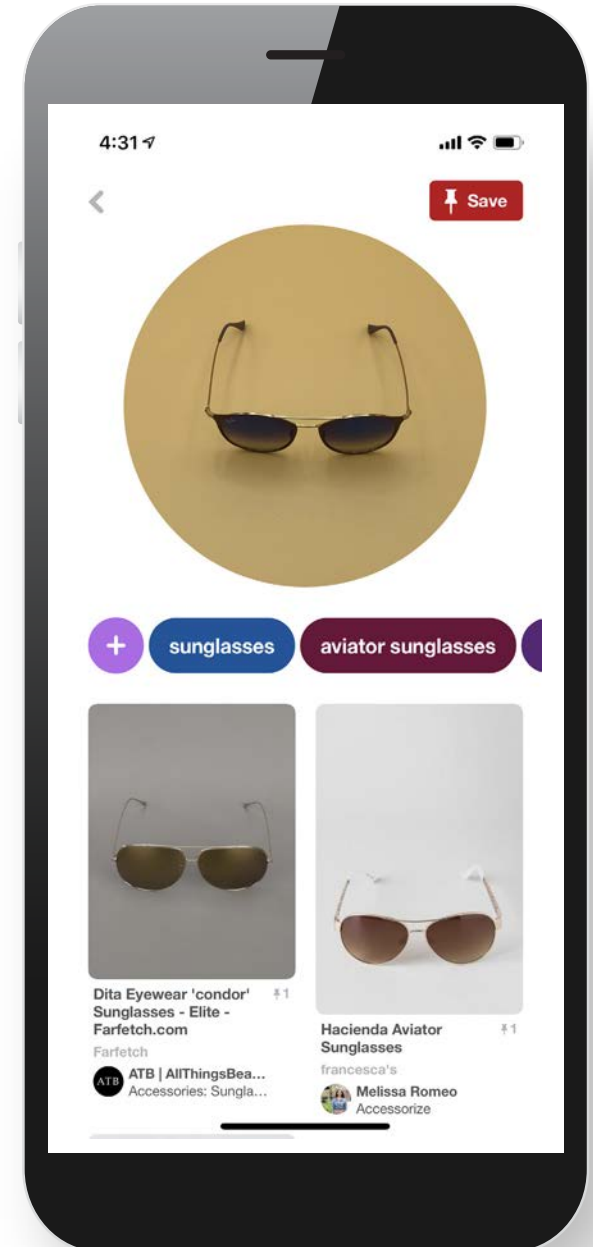


### Top categories for Lens searches:

1. Fashion
2. Home decor
3. Art
4. Food
5. Products
6. Animals
7. Outfits
8. Beauty
9. Vehicles
10. Travel

### Top trending Lens searches:

1. Tattoos
2. Nails
3. Sunglasses
4. Jeans
5. Cats
6. Wedding dress
7. Plants
8. Quilts
9. Brownies
10. Natural hair

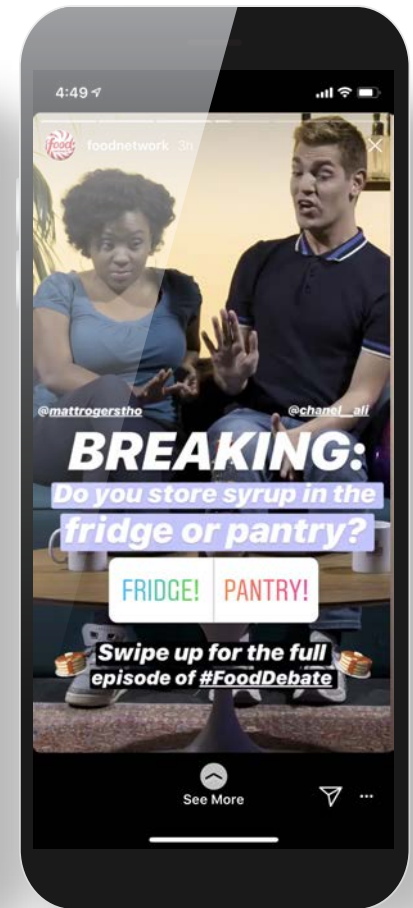
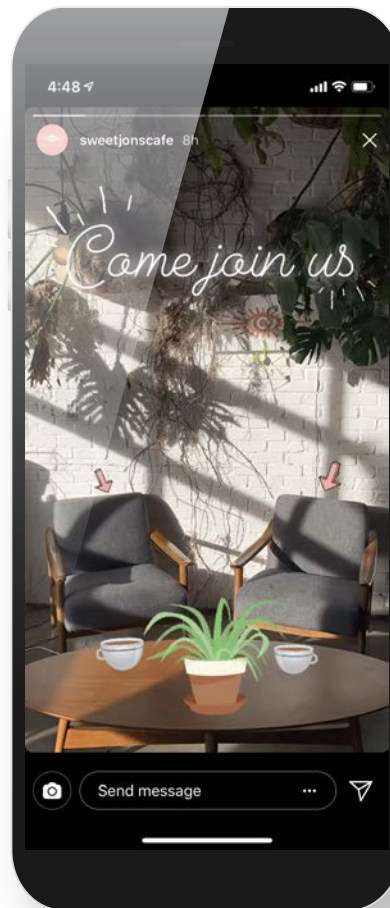


## SOCIAL MEDIA STORIES

Facebook's chief product officer Chris Cox recently predicted an "increase in the Stories format is on a path to surpass feeds as the primary way people share things with their friends sometime next year (2019)." Launched by Snapchat and quickly adopted by Instagram and finally Facebook, stories are short-lived slideshows made up of a blend of photos and video, typically shot over a specified time period (a day, an event, or a meal). Based on their rapid growth and popularity, businesses may no longer be able to ignore platform. While not as off-the-cuff as they may seem from a production standpoint, the value in the medium lies in balancing production with authentic content.

Stories are also a great way to engage your audience in a real way. Users can submit their own real-time reviews allowing brands to maximize on users' social capital.<sup>21</sup>

Bottom line, Stories are rapidly taking over traditional newsfeeds, and for brands that use social media heavily to reach their audience, adoption of Stories on your social platforms is key if you want to stay relevant.



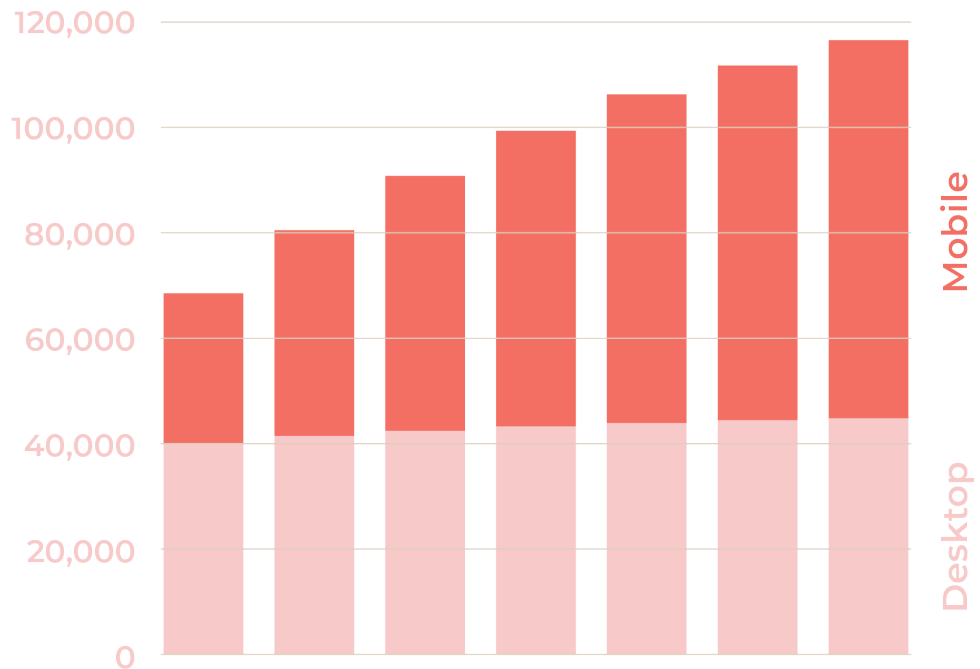
## WAITING FOR THE MARKETING SWITCH TO FLIP – WHERE TO SPEND IN 2019

So it's in with the new, out with the . . . wait, wait, wait. Not quite. In marketing we adapt, migrate, or become extinct. The 2019 trends aforementioned should, without question, be driving your innovation efforts. Testing or adopting some or all of the capabilities mentioned here certainly stands to elevate you in the hearts and minds of your customers thanks to their authenticity and relevance.

Trending technologies, new takes on old strategies and innovative tactics are always worthy of consideration. But in all things, the “switch” hasn't flipped to allow these tactics to solely carry your marketing strategy. While you're innovating, you're still responsible for generating traffic, producing leads, and proving ROI. So your marketing mix is as important now as ever. Here's where to consider putting your hard-fought marketing dollars in 2019.

When looking at your marketing spend, know that forecasts predict overall revenue growth in digital advertising to continue, particularly in mobile.<sup>22</sup> Your digital marketing spend should include a mix of display, social, video and search advertising. Not convinced? Consider these statistics:

Digital advertising revenue in the United States from 2015 to 2021, by device (in million U.S. dollars)



Sources: Statista; Statista DMO © Statista 2018 Additional Information: United States; Statista DMO; 2016

- **Display advertising:** Revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2018-2023) of 9.2%, resulting in a market volume of US\$83,183m by 2023.<sup>23</sup>
- **Video advertising:** Revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2018-2023) of 13.7%, resulting in a market volume of US\$52,760m by 2023.<sup>24</sup>
- **Search advertising:** Revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2018-2023) of 6.8%, resulting in a market volume of US\$134,601m by 2023.<sup>25</sup>
- **Social media advertising:** Revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2018-2023) of 26.2%, resulting in a market volume of US\$217,925m by 2023.<sup>26</sup>

Within the digital sphere lies Content Marketing – said to be the most effective technique in 2018 for digital marketers in the U.S.<sup>27</sup> Most used by B2B marketers are long-form content like guides and whitepapers, video snippets and social media stories.<sup>28</sup> Spending is expected to grow in this area – half of surveyed B2B marketers said their content marketing budgets will increase in 2019.<sup>29</sup> If you aren't considering how to utilize content marketing in 2019, think again. Your competitors are undoubtedly strategizing on it right now.

TV is still a thing. Despite year-over-year drops in broadcast engagement, internet users still watch more broadcast TV than online, in every age group. Online TV isn't cannibalizing broadcast – it's complementing it. Broadcast TV ranks highest for brand discovery – 37% of people find out about new brands through TV ads.<sup>30</sup>

Radio can still be reliable, but online radio and podcasts continue to see growth – 90% of Americans aged 12+ say they have listened to traditional radio in the past week, 57% of Americans 12+ say they have listened to online radio in the past week (53% in 2017) and 26% 12+ have listened to a podcast in the past month (compared to just 9% in 2008).<sup>31</sup> 68% of those surveyed in July 2018 said they wouldn't mind a couple of extra ads per show so that their favorite podcasts can continue – and 53%



said most of the ads they hear on podcasts are engaging.<sup>32</sup>

Continuing to hone your email marketing strategy is important. The topics that will drive email marketing strategy across all industries in 2019 include Data collection, Personalization, Compelling Content, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation.<sup>33</sup>

Print lives. Printed newspapers, books and magazines are still more popular in the U.S.

than their digital counterparts.<sup>34</sup> And people are still more receptive to traditional (versus digital) advertising channels –including print, outdoor and TV – with traditional tactics holding a 50% percent positive perception. 55% of those surveyed said they preferred print ads to any other medium.<sup>35</sup> The ad engagement rate is highest in premium print (magazines and news brands) compared to social and display.<sup>36</sup> So depending on your product, category or service, print still holds a key place in your marketing mix.



## CONCLUSIONS.

Marketers are constantly charged with testing new strategies, evaluating their success (or failure) and applying those insights to future efforts. It is both an art and science. At its best, looking at new innovations to hone the craft is inspiring and can have a core-shaking effect on an industry that thrives on change. At its worst, marketing can be an overwhelming struggle to get and stay ahead of the curve. In the end, the obligation is clear – be good stewards of limited marketing dollars, show ROI, and generate leads and revenue to keep your business moving forward.

That's where we come in.

Alabama Media Group is dedicated to being your ally in the marketing journey. Core to our business is the continual development of marketing solutions across current and emerging platforms. Our team offers full-service marketing solutions for local, regional and national brands. And with one of the most sophisticated unified data management platforms in the industry, we offer our advertising partners unmatched access to customer insights and audience targeting capabilities for strategies and solutions that drive what you want most. Results.

It's time we talked. Email us at [advertise@al.com](mailto:advertise@al.com).



## ABOUT ALABAMA MEDIA GROUP

Alabama Media Group is a digitally-minded news and information company that combines the up-to-the-minute access of AL.com and gulflive.com with the long revered, award-winning journalism of The Birmingham News, The Huntsville Times and Mobile's Press-Register and The Mississippi Press.

Through award-winning brands, including "Reckon by AL.com," "People of Alabama," "It's a Southern Thing" and "This is Alabama," AMG brands craft compelling digital programming to connect with the

community. As both a digital marketing agency and a publisher, Alabama Media Group drives daily conversations and engages millions through stories that inform, entertain, inspire, and connect our communities to the world around them.

Alabama Media Group is part of Advance Local, one of the nations' leading media and marketing companies, attracting more than 48 million consumers across a stable of award-winning digital and print brands in markets throughout the U.S.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/247845/attitudes-to-online-advertising-us/>
- 2 <https://www.statista.com/topics/4481/personalized-marketing/>
- 3 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/795207/us-consumer-view-purchase-history-based-mobile-shopping-recommendations/>
- 4 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/809509/us-marketers-personalization-strategies-effectiveness/>
- 5 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/746291/us-agencies-marketers-digital-mobile-ad-spending/>
- 6 <https://www.southernthing.com/videos/>
- 7 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUOZvgB9Q8AgZjLYcLWztQ/feed>
- 8 <https://www.facebook.com/SouthernThingSoTrue/>
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- 13 <https://www.theedesign.com/blog/2017/voice-search-impacts-digital-marketing>
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- 19 <https://newsroom.pinterest.com/en/post/celebrating-one-year-of-pinterest-lens>
- 20 <https://www.blog.google/products/google-lens/>
- 21 <https://www.fastcompany.com/90252767/4-tips-on-how-to-succeed-with-stories>
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- 25 <https://www.statista.com/outlook/219/100/search-advertising/worldwide>
- 26 <https://www.statista.com/outlook/220/100/social-media-advertising/worldwide>
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- 28 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271562/content-marketing-tactics-used-in-b2b-communications-in-north-america/>
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