

Marketing trends to look out for in 2018

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From chatbots to dark social, what trends do you think will dominate the marketing landscape in 2018? Find out what the Penguin experts predict is in store for us.



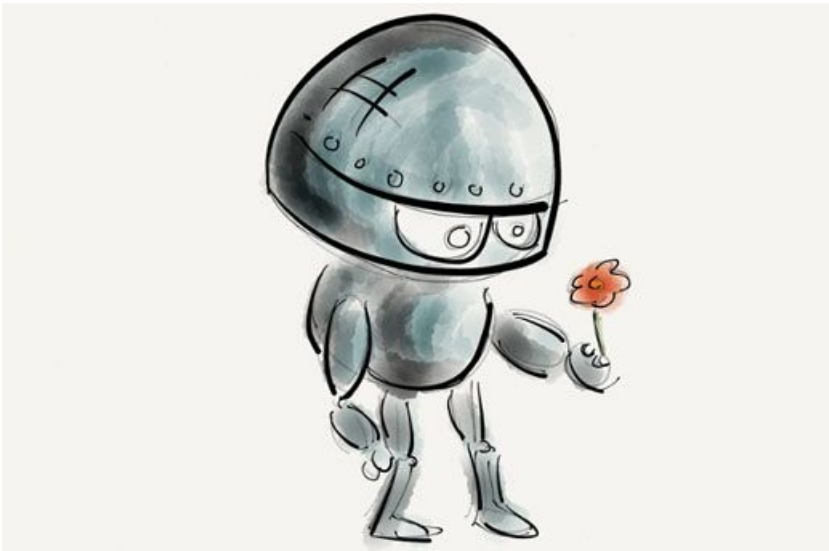
We blinked and just like that, 2017 was gone...



Image source: Giphy

It's that time of year again when the Penguin experts are sharing their predictions for marketing trends in 2018. We spoke to [Lisa Singh](#) (Account Director), [Lungi Sibiya](#) (Media Buyer), [Nicole Fourie](#) (Production Manager), [Nicole Glover](#) (Social Media Manager), [Ryan Nofal](#) (Client Service Director) and [Veronica Wainstein](#) (MD) to find out what trends they think we should be watching in over the next 12 months.

1. Chatbots are coming to mainstream marketing - and we can't wait



Artificial intelligence and, more specifically, chatbots, saw [massive growth](#) in 2017. As social media networks like Facebook open their platforms to developers, it's becoming easier and easier for brands to integrate various tools and create smart experiences for their customers.

In 2018, we'll see brands adopting chatbots to work hand in hand with their marketing automation strategies. The first trial bots will be somewhat clumsy and will still feel impersonal, but the tech will catch up faster than the brand uptake. By the end of 2018, chatbots will be driving websites and social media strategies. Veronica says:

"My recommendation would be that brands do the homework now. Run closed group testing, conceptualise and strategise on implementation and how that will drive the brand forward into a world where marketing automation is quickly replacing clumsy, inexperienced staff who are the face of a business. After all, who wouldn't want an instant engagement between brands and consumers that feels like the real thing, only smarter, faster and more accurate?"

2. The media buying industry will get even tougher...

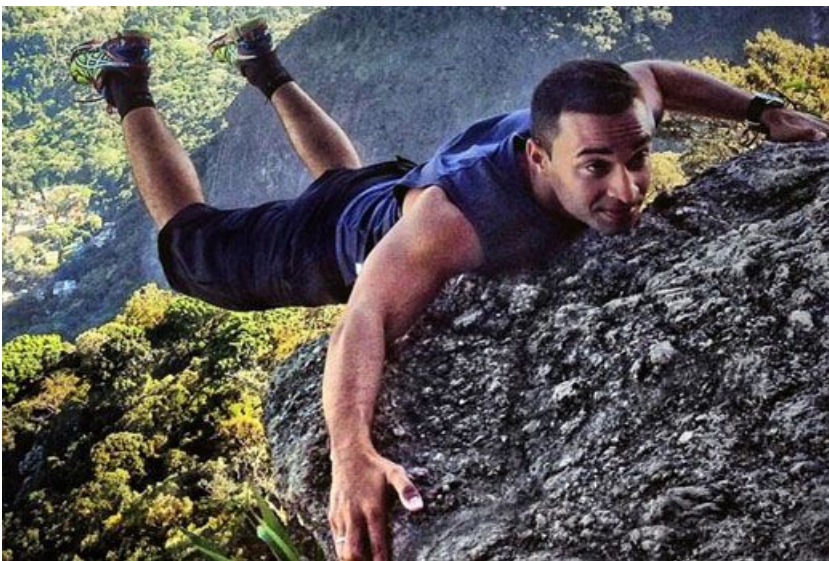


Image source: Daily Mirror UK

With [South Africa's junk status](#) and a struggling economy, brands will need to get creative with their budgets during 2018.

Marketing is usually the first department to feel the pinch of a recession, as budget cuts are inevitable. Despite the budget cuts, marketers need to find a way to continue generating leads. Traditional media like TV and radio are extremely expensive in comparison to the likes of social media. The digital space offers brands more bang for their buck - sending

media buyers looking for creative ways to get maximum exposure with their smaller budgets.

We'll see more and more brands taking a truly integrated approach to marketing in 2018 - with their budgets weighted in favour of digital over traditional marketing methods. We'll also see a huge rise in marketing automation. This will partially be due to the cost factor, but also because of the [measurability of digital and inbound marketing](#). Marketers will need to be able to prove their ROI, and digital marketing offers the unique ability to do so.

We will however, still need traditional media as part of the marketing mix, as this provides consumers with something tangible in the real world. What'll need to happen is that traditional media will need to align with digital to drive leads and understand consumer behavior, which is now imperative in personalising messaging. Once in the digital space, then data becomes imperative... This means that media houses will need to partner with data suppliers (and come to the party with pricing) in order to be competitive and successful during the tough economic climate.

3. Social media and TV advertising will happen in sync



With a multitude of devices to turn to during ad breaks, TV advertisers are facing a real challenge: how do we capture our audience's attention? TV syncing is the solution marketers have been searching for, according to Lisa.

In 2018, advertisers will begin seamlessly integrating online and traditional marketing strategies using TV ad syncing. As soon as a particular TV ad is detected by your mobile device, a digital ad campaign is triggered - displaying ads for your brand across multiple devices simultaneously.

We're interested to see how other mediums such as outdoor and print will manage the integration into digital using new technologies. We'll keep an eye out and let you know if we see any further developments.

4. Dark social is on the rise

Nicole Glover says:

"With 98% of messages opened (and 90% of them opened within three seconds), I foresee brands making use of Whatsapp in cool and exciting ways. Not only with Whatsapp but dark social in general."



Image source: [Lead Agency](#)

But what on earth is dark social? We're glad you asked...

Dark social, a term coined by Alexis Madrigal (deputy editor of [The Atlantic](#)), refers to people sharing content via private messaging channels like [WhatsApp](#). Essentially, it's the web traffic that can't be tracked or attributed to a known source. Whenever you send your mom a link to a funny cat video via WhatsApp, you've engaged in dark social. Whenever you email a meme to your colleague in a meeting, you've engaged in dark social.

Dark social is everywhere - and that's why, in 2018, we can't ignore it.

Even though there's currently no way to track dark social, brands will need to find creative ways to leverage platforms like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and WeChat going forward.

5. Content saturation will force advertisers to tell great stories in 2018

When content marketing first took off, it was all about quantity. Brands pushed out as much content as they could, on as many topics as they could, as fast as they could - to grab as much online real estate as possible.



Our audiences have matured. The novelty of content marketing is wearing off, and readers are tired of mirage content (content that promises value, but doesn't deliver).

In 2018, brands will need to do more than just churn out blog posts. They'll need to [start telling stories that are authentic](#) and appeal to real human beings.



To do this, brands will need to identify their niche in the market and provide longform, insightful, deep-dive content that is genuinely helpful.

The quality of content production also needs to stand out.

We've gone from an era where a shooting a TV commercial would range anywhere from R2 million to R6 million. The digital landscape changed that entirely, where budget videos can now be produced at a rapid pace, at minimal cost. In some cases this is great because the content looks more authentic - but brands can't forget to continue to put the sparkle on their advertising. It's taken years and years of reinvention to get your brand noticed, don't diminish that by compromising on great production.

6. Emojis, GIFs, memes and video will dominate



Image source: Getemoji

2018 will be all about personalising your marketing messages.

The trend toward in-depth content and dark social is testimony to the fact that people want marketing that speaks to their individual needs - [not superficial fluff](#) that targets an entire demographic audience.

The rising popularity of emojis, GIFs, memes and video all talk to the need for great storytelling. The use of personalisation in email subject lines, for example, can [increase open rates up to 23%](#).

Brands will need to tell their stories in a format that their audiences want to receive, consume and interact with information.

In 2018, competition will be tough. Brands will need to start getting very creative with their marketing, to be able to succeed in a market filled with budget cuts and highly educated consumers.

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