

2019 Consumer Engagement Trends Report

A comprehensive guide to the top ten leading trends for acquiring and activating consumer data in 2019.

WILY

Introduction

To anticipate where consumer engagement is heading in 2019, we must first explore the areas that are most important to marketers, their businesses, and what opportunities lay ahead. Today, the conversation most marketers are having is around personalization. Personalization is not a new topic of discussion. According to [reports by CMO.com](#), marketing is still at “a very basic level of personalization,” but strategies will mature in 2019 as companies begin connecting data and content to deliver on the notion of one-to-one marketing.

Data has started to become central to consumer experiences. The ability to collect, analyze, and deploy new ideas from consumer analytics is without a doubt the most important, yet underutilized area for marketers. The need for personalization is far too important to ignore, and the insights from that data can help make this a reality.

How then can marketers effectively engage consumers and activate campaigns so that they can acquire the data needed to make future marketing decisions? This report will explore 10 consumer engagement trends that are central to data acquisition and activation in 2019. This will serve as a resource for marketers to further engage their audience and activate around their personal preference.

This report will assist brand marketers and agencies in their quest to engage consumers in the digital-first era. It will outline the emerging trends and technologies that marketers will lean towards to gather important consumer data to personalize communications across various touchpoints along the customer journey.

These ten leading and emerging trends will be ones to follow in 2019:

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WILY operates at the intersection of data, technology, and marketing to link data-driven consumer engagement with program execution across several business units and consumer touch points.

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1. The Value of Data-Driven Creatives Will Be Realized

Data has taken over the spotlight as the key driver for all marketing strategy. Now that marketing teams are regularly collecting data and making decisions based on those insights, it is time for marketers to get back to their roots: creativity. In a report by CMO.com, Stacy Martinet, VP of marketing strategy and communications at Adobe revealed:

“A data-driven approach to creativity helps marketers work more productively, create the right content faster, and deliver that content to the right customer, across the right channels, at the right time. One common denominator among today’s most innovative companies is a unified view of the customer, pulling data from across multiple sources. The data piece is table stakes nowadays. It’s going to take a mix of creativity and intelligence to stand out.”

—
Additionally, Alvaro Del Pozo, VP of Marketing for Adobe APAC explains,

“The digital leaders of tomorrow need to look at technology from a creativity and design perspective – not just an efficiency perspective. To get CX right, its delivery should span the entire organization – from CMOs to CIOs to creative leads – through collaborative, enabling technologies.”

This signals a shift towards more collective creativity in the marketing and advertising space. As data reveals each stage of the customer journey, marketers will begin to better optimize creative content to offer more engaging experiences through the 360 degree view of the customer. Marketers who hope to get consumer engagement right in 2019, will strike a fine balance between data-driven and creative-driven content.

See how adding digital mechanics to your campaign can boost engagement.

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2. 5G and Mobile-First Marketing

Today, nearly 60% of shoppers look up product information and prices while in stores, and that number is going to grow next year. And now that augmented reality is available to hundreds of millions of iOS users across the globe, retailers and brands are building more mobile experiences that overlay real-time information onto a shopper's surroundings in-store.

Additionally, 5G will bring forward a new supercharged mobile landscape for marketers in 2019. 5G's ability to process data more swiftly is predicted to supercharge marketers' capabilities around personalized content and real-time ad targeting at a more granular level, as well as power the evolution of connected devices like cars, speakers and wearables. [Intel and Ovum](#) forecasts that video will comprise 90% of all 5G traffic in 10 years, signaling major opportunity for marketers to develop quality mobile content and better engage audiences.

Moreover, 5G makes virtual reality viable. Streaming video with no buffering will become a reality so brands will be able to finally explore immersive media formats such as VR and AR and start creating totally different creative.

In 2019 we can expect to see a pivotal shift toward increased mobile usage. As people become increasingly reliant on their smartphones, the use of digital wallets and branded applications will add to the ways brands interact with their customers. Taking advantage of this opportunity to engage customers and connect with them on their preferred channel is achievable.



3. Artificial Intelligence Gets Even Smarter

Artificial intelligence (AI) has received a lot of hype over the years, but 2019 is projected to be the year AI finally begins to serve its intended purpose.

There are a number of ways AI will impact marketing strategy in the coming year; some big, some small. Therefore, this section will explore three distinct areas that will see the greatest transformation from AI in 2019, in relation to consumer engagement and personalization. These areas include, but are not limited to: chatbots, predictive analytics, and mobile AR.

a. Chatbots

Last year, artificially intelligent assistants known as chatbots were all the rage. They were self-learning and capable of creating contextual customer engagement through messaging applications. However, early reviews indicated that chatbots lacked proper natural language skills, and many preferred speaking to a live customer service representative over a chatbot. This will change in 2019, as chatbots' abilities are only continuing to improve.

Emobots will be able to gauge the real-time emotional reactions of a customer to provide the most suitable level of service and properly adjust the conversation as needed.

b. Predictive Analytics

Predictive analytics can now analyze customer information, purchase patterns and past interactions to predict an individual's wants. This will enable brands to offer relevant product recommendations and timely reminders when a customer is likely in need of a restock. The ability to demonstrate your attentiveness to customer needs will drive positive engagement moving forward.

c. Mobile Augmented Reality

AR is easier to access and more cost-effective than it's ever been. AR's ability to be deployed on a consumer's personal mobile device or tablet will finally give this technology the attention it deserves. The fact that AR can be used on mobile devices will make adoption easier, less intimidating, and more affordable.

In 2019, forward-thinking brands will have the opportunity to harness artificial intelligence through many emerging technologies that create more engaging and individualized experiences than they have in the past.

4. Leveraging The Internet of Things (IoT)

The Internet of Things (IoT) is the connection of everyday products like cars, alarm clocks, and lights to computing devices via the internet.



IoT allows for the ability to exchange data with connected devices, providing marketers with more context about how their customers' use their products. This enables marketers to deliver more relevant messages while leading to greater customer engagement.

It's been predicted that by 2020, there will be at least five IoT connected objects for every smartphone user. For online shopping and ecommerce brands specifically, this means an entirely new wave of opportunities to connect with consumers as the IoT transforms inanimate objects into potential sales channels. Building off the desire of consumers for brands to anticipate their needs, IoT connected items such as refrigerators know when an item needs to be replaced and can initiate an order.

IoT devices generate unprecedented amounts of data, so every customer interaction allows marketers to capture consumer intent, behavior, needs, and desires. This makes it possible to serve relevant marketing messages to customers at the right place, and at the right time.

Along with the traditional responsibilities of agencies, they will start playing an increasingly technical, data-centric role as technology partners. Agencies, and marketing technology partners like WILY, will help to build their client's platforms, develop internal systems, and manage the implementation of tagging elements.

In 2019, marketers must adapt to their role as creatives and data analysts. More research and development about this ever-evolving space is vital to success, and agencies must communicate these new opportunities to clients. Additionally, a keen understanding of the data IoT delivers, and what actions to take within a given customer journey is integral to a positive consumer engagement strategy.

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5. Voice Storytelling Will Re-emerge

In 2019, the voice recognition market is estimated to be worth [\\$601 million](#). By the end of 2022, voice commerce is expected to be a [\\$40 billion](#) industry, and [55 percent](#) of American homes will include at least one smart speaker. Additionally, [RBC Capital Markets has predicted](#) that Amazon's Alexa will bring in \$10 billion in e-commerce revenue by 2020.

As voice activated devices take over consumer households, so will the opportunity to leverage the technology for marketing purposes as consumers continue to integrate them into their daily lives.

"It's not a matter of if voice will be used as a brand and marketing advantage, but when, and when that shift happens—moving from voice search to voice engagement—retailers want to have a first-mover advantage, as users only hear the No. 1 recommendation."

– Robert Blatt, CEO of MomentFeed

The benefits of voice are numerous. Voice technology is a key modality, removing a major source of friction from the more cumbersome keyboard, mouse, and touchscreen. Voice also promises to bring a more human form of storytelling to digital experiences, as well as an opportunity to engage consumers with personalized marketing in a more natural state.

Voice recognition technology is still maturing, but it comes with the promise of "decoding" user intent and understanding the words behind consumers' searches. With the help of artificial

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intelligence, brands can read contextual clues to refine their customer personas according to their stage of the buying journey. Armed with this information, brands will be better positioned to fine tune their voice in accordance with intent.

As technology continues to advance throughout 2019, the CMOs who are prepared for this shift will be the ones whose brands win the biggest market share. It's now up to brands and marketers to figure out where they fit in the bigger picture, and how to deliver content that serves a purpose to engage and activate consumers through voice.

TIP: Explore how marketers are currently experimenting with voice control to engage consumers in ["Behind the Numbers" with eMarketer's Victoria Petrock](#).

6. Experience-Driven Marketing

As channels become over-crowded, and access to target consumers uncertain, experiential marketing is proving to be more important than ever before. The ability to combine in-person events with digital experiences will be necessary for marketers looking to engage consumers in 2019.

“In today’s digital world, consumers are increasingly craving emotive experiences that engage them on a deeper level. For brands, there’s a significant opportunity to fulfill this need through experiential marketing.”

– Jennifer Breithaupt, Global Consumer CMO, Citi

Reports indicate that nearly 60% of event creators aren’t using experiential marketing. But the numbers suggest significant support for these types of marketing activities. 89% of over-performing businesses put a high value on live events, with 84% of them saying that they have strong support from leadership when it comes to event marketing.

The company singled out three sectors:

- Software and services, where 92% of over-performing businesses believe live events are instrumental to their success, 82% have strong support from leadership;
- Media, at 81% and 86%, respectively;
- Commercial and professional services, at 90% and 75%, respectively.

The reason for investment in live events is related to algorithm changes by digital giants such as Facebook and Google, which has jeopardized digital revenue for many businesses. As these tech companies push for more advertising spend, businesses who cannot outbid or outspend on digital platforms will falter.

Thus, experiential marketing will allow for these brands to target the consumers they want, and engage them in real-time through in-person and digital activations.

Relationships between brands and consumers, mainly among millennials, are critical. In order to captive audiences, it’s vital to get face time and create memorable moments that are now challenging to achieve over digital. The future lies in personalizing the digital experience for live audiences and those watching remotely. Anudit Vikram, SVP of audience solutions at Dun & Bradstreet, explained why integrated experiences are going to be a big part of any successful experiential commerce strategy in 2019:

“We’ll see a continued focus on seamless experiences across different channels and platforms,” as brands continue to try and remove friction and pain points across the ever-growing number of customer touch points that could potentially lead to a transaction.”

See how a national Sporting Goods Retailer engaged fans in-arena with a digital activation by instantly driving them to retail.

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7. Purpose-Driven Marketing Will Win Big

Purpose-driven marketing is a popular approach, when done correctly, that resonates with consumers. However, in 2019, marketers should be made aware of how important these messages are becoming to consumers. Gen Z and Millennials are more inclined to engage with, and purchase from, brands that mirror their socio-political views. Marketers should also be optimizing these messages digitally in order to reach, and engage with these target consumers.

Use digital technology to create and scale authentic, meaningful experiences for the sophisticated and unimpressible Gen Z audience. They prefer brands that stand for ideals that they care about.

**— Ben Foo, CMO,
Taylor's University**

In addition to this, marketers will be asked to provide more evidence that their brand is to be trusted.

Professional market research companies can design, execute, and analyze projects that create case studies. Case studies demonstrate the value and benefit of a product or service and are backed by research. It is one thing for a company to say they are reputable, authentic, and a product or services works, but it has more perceived value and truth by the consumer when those claims are supported by proven evidence through research.

We will see a “return to trust” movement fueled by today’s politically charged environment. Consumers will gravitate toward authentic, trustworthy companies committed to delivering unmatched value, convenience, and personalization.

—Jim Lyski, CMO, CarMax

Case studies can be intertwined directly into marketing campaigns, or they can be shared through publications to demonstrate the credibility of the company or brand.

In 2019, it is recommended that business leaders be active on social media to not only share about themselves, but also the products and services their company offers in order to build rapport with target markets. Going forward, the ability to build trust with consumers should be part of the company and brand identity. Market research can assist with identifying what and how content should be shared on social media platforms.

The crucial point here is that in 2019 engagement will directly relate to a brand's ability to demonstrate value, authenticity and helpfulness to the target market.

8. Video Marketing Becomes A Powerhouse

PRODUCED VIDEO CONTENT

As already mentioned, technology will continue to change the face of marketing. According to a [recent study by media agency Zenith](#), the internet will catch up to television regarding “time spent using” in 2019, and a large percentage of that time will be spent watching video content.

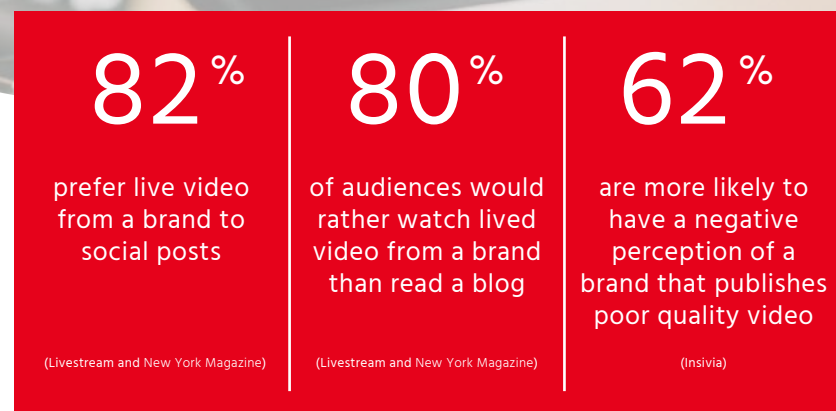
With the increase in video content viewership, market research will need to strategically uncover what target markets are watching and why. Live video is becoming more and more popular. YouTube use was [reported as one of the top social media platforms in 2018 at 87%](#), demonstrating the power of video content. Although video content will continue to rise as an effective way to reach target markets, the content must be captivating to keep the target market’s attention.

Voice-of-Customer (VoC) supports a company and brand to create and use engaging content that the target market will be drawn to. With advertising and marketing, how quickly the target market becomes engaged is vital to the success of a marketing campaign. With video marketing, the most enticing content needs to be shared immediately since the [average video viewer decides to watch or skip the video within 10 seconds](#).

A professional market research project can provide the knowledge for a company to put their best and most engaging content out into the marketplace. Driving brand, product and service awareness leads to more viewers converting into purchasing customers.

LIVE STREAMING

The popularity of video content can be taken one step further with live streaming. As much as consumers value well-produced video content,



they are equally interested in seeing brands embrace the moment. “In the moment” marketing, is a huge driver of engagement, especially with the super-connected Generation Z. Consumers value authentic marketing more and more, and live streaming is a great way to show your “true brand” to audiences. The reason for this is it allows for a two-way conversation between brand and consumer. Marketers cannot hide behind the veil of corporate communications, and rather have to answer to consumers in the moment. If you are confident in your brand message, this is an opportunity to educate a wide audience through a variety of avenues. Some of the most popular live streaming tactics include:

- Q&As and conversations with your audience
- Live support
- Special announcements and product introductions
- Interviews and influencer outreach
- Blogger hosted/partner-hosted streams
- Live events
- Backstage pass and behind-the-scene glimpses

Marketers who plan to include live streaming into their 2019 customer engagement strategy should learn to plan ahead but should not aim to overproduce. Audiences will not engage with content that comes off as fabricated or inauthentic. Social media affords marketers with free tools to make live streaming a reality at a low cost.

9. Brands Pivot to Shifting Social Media Behaviours

Since the advent of social media, marketers have explored ways to leverage these channels to reach audiences en masse, and have done so successfully with viral content. However, social media is beginning to see user segmentation, and marketers looking to use this channel to engage audiences will need to adapt to this change. Marketers will find that in 2019 that they will have to pivot their strategy in order to effectively reach their target audiences.

The data reveals that future-thinking marketers must look towards strategies that satisfy Instagram and Snapchat users, and rethink how much time and effort they are putting into declining channels like Facebook. As social media apps like Snapchat continue to grow, laggards will have to adopt and adapt an engagement strategy that works for this medium. B2C companies will need to tailor content and messages relating to this audience, and onboard audiences in new creative ways.

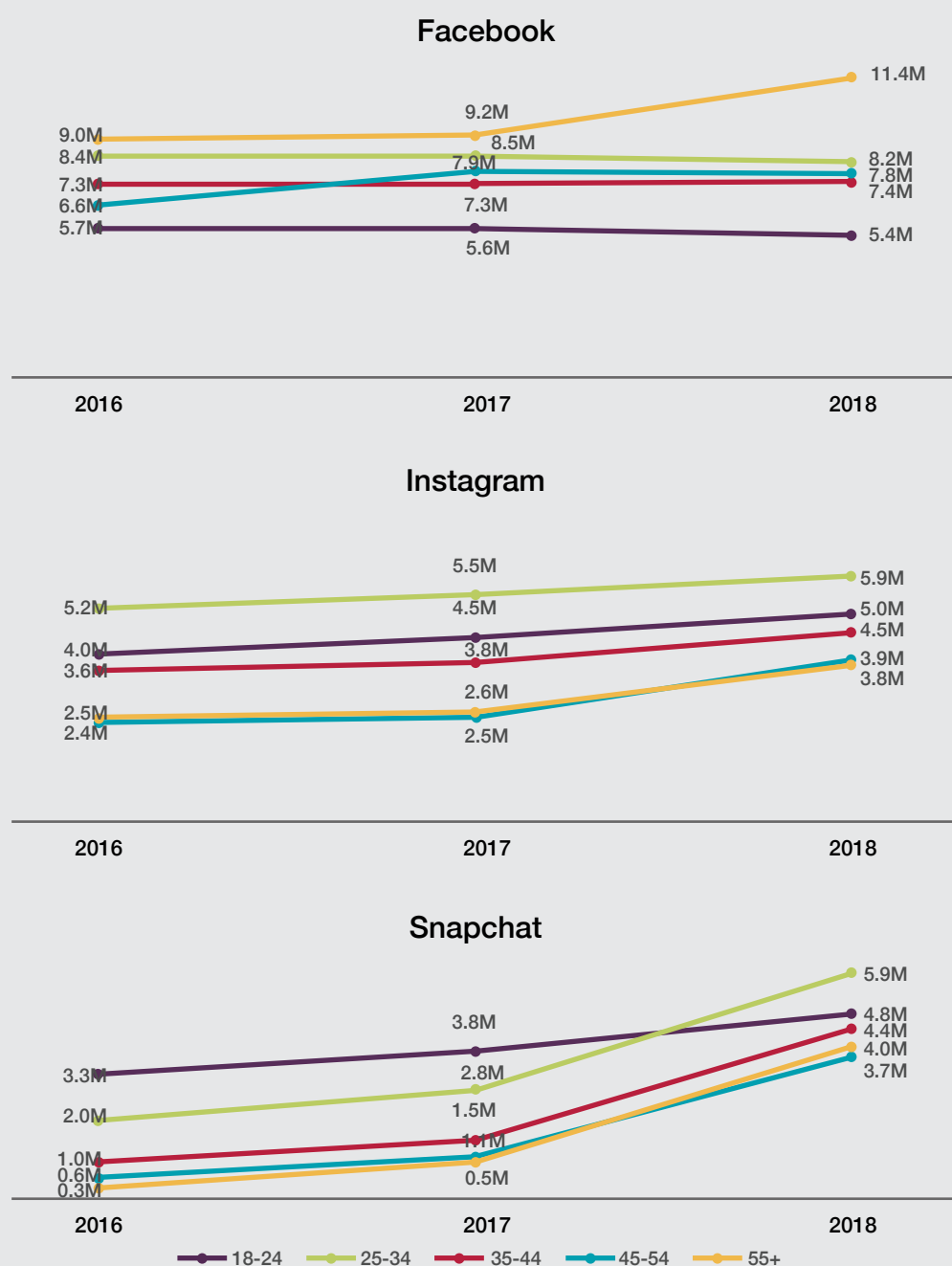
The [Communications Market Review](#) reported the most recent changes in age-related usage of social networks between 2016 to 2018:

The visualization gives a great summary of the changes in three of the main consumer network:

Facebook - Static or declining in most age groups except the older (55+ age group) which is now the biggest group of users

Instagram - Increase in usage across all age groups with the largest, the 25 to 34 age group followed by 18 to 24

Snapchat - The largest increase and biggest user group is again the 25 to 34 age group showing that Snapchat isn't just for teens. Indeed, there are also increases in users in older age groups which are not far behind the younger age groups in adoption levels. However, the frequency of use isn't considered in this compilation.



10. The Polarity of Data Privacy vs. Personalization

In 2019, failure to comply with data privacy and protection regulations will have a detrimental impact on an enterprise's ability to conduct business globally. Innovative enterprises will see this as an opportunity to deliver better customer experiences and to build customer trust and loyalty, while others will find it much more difficult to adjust.

There is a dichotomy that exists in the marketing world right now, as the pressure for consumer privacy increases, yet the need for personalization grows more everyday. Gartner L2 Intelligence Report on Data and Targeting revealed that 50% of consumers in the U.K. and U.S. are generally not willing to give up their personal data — but 47% also believe it's "helpful" to receive recommendations based on browsing history. To this end, companies must have a clear strategy and plan for marketing, sales and data governance. They must consider new ways to attract customers and generate revenue. This includes assessing and accelerating changes needed across their data landscape, especially marketing databases, demand generation systems and customer relationship management systems. Companies must create a privacy-centric information ecosystem, with analytics and security at the core, with the aim to deliver secure interactions and superior customer experiences.

I expect to see the polarity between data privacy and personalization to continue. The ethics of data usage will get raised as more brands experience data breaches.

– Abhijit Bhaduri, Founder,
Abhijit Bhaduri And Associates

In short, brands must take a proactive, transparent stance on privacy if they want to reap the rewards of sophisticated, targeted marketing. This means that all data, including third-party data collection, must be vetted and approved as well. Additionally, agencies must be vigilant about the technology vendors they work with to ensure privacy and security is up to corporate and consumer standards.

Conclusion: Data, Creativity, and Trust Will Prevail

The ability to turn data into actionable insights will be integral to marketing success throughout 2019.

Marketers can now take the guesswork out of execution and feel empowered with the information they need to deliver personalized consumer experiences.

The progress being made with emerging technologies will provide marketers with new and exciting ways to connect with their target audience, standout from their competitors, and drive growth. They will be able to better customize their content and deliver a more timely, targeted offers to their consumers.

Additionally, a return to building trust will be vital for business success as a new wave of digital-first consumers decide which brands align best with their socio-political beliefs. At the same time, data privacy and protection will instill this confidence as marketers become more transparent with their consumer-facing activities.

Overall, marketers who are willing to think outside-of-the box about how they acquire consumer data and activate it will come out on top this year.

ABOUT WILY



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