

A Metia report

B2B marketing trends for 2018

Seven essential trends for the savvy CMO



metia

Contents

Introduction	3
1. Attribution redeems awareness	4
2. GDPR will popularize the Fair Exchange of Value	6
3. Authenticity is table stakes	8
4. The ad industry sucks and it is costing your business	10
5. Emotion is B2B marketing's missing link	12
6. Be data smart, not data led	14
7. Social has split in two (and there's no going back)	16
Closing thoughts	18
About Metia	19

Introduction



The pace of change in marketing is relentless. New platforms, tools, and techniques come and go in the blink of an eye.

Marketers are bombarded with trends. Understanding these trends is key to driving measurable value for their businesses – and they are under more pressure than ever to do just that.

Which trends do marketing leaders need to listen to now, and which are unlikely to make an impact for years to come? And how do these trends translate to B2B marketing?

The trends in this report are aimed squarely at B2B marketers. They are born from our experiences in 2017, working in partnership with our clients to generate measurable returns for businesses like yours.

If these trends pique your interest, make sure to get in touch. We have a host of case studies that illustrate these points, and would love to talk you through them.

Peter Morgan

Vice President, Demand
Metia Group

1 Attribution redeems awareness



The industry's move to multi-channel attribution will provide a clearer understanding of marketing impact – and increase investments in generating awareness.

Last-click attribution is the policy of assigning credit for marketing conversions to the last action that triggered them. It's a blunt model, but it's worked well for the industry – mainly because it was better than what came before: no attribution.

Of course, conversions are often driven by multiple interactions, and the major drawback of last-click attribution is that any preceding interactions are entirely ignored. This overvalues the final interaction, and undervalues everything that came before.

“79% of consumers use their smartphones to research, however only ~10% of purchases are on a mobile device ... and companies spend just 13% of their media budgets on mobile advertising ... We need to move away from last-click attribution models to something that better reflects a consumer journey.”

Laura Beaudin, Bain & Company

The good news: technology has advanced to the point where attributing success to multiple interactions is more straight-forward, and this trend towards multi-channel attribution is only heading in one direction.

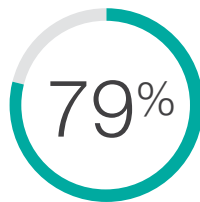
Multi-channel attribution will increase the value of awareness investments

While direct response investments – such as lead generation – are undoubtedly generating value for brands, the impact of these investments on revenue is likely over-stated, as other contributing sources are being ignored.

Conversely, the impact of top-of-funnel investments on revenue is likely undervalued as there has been no way to directly measure business impact.

As adoption of multi-channel attribution accelerates, expect a new equilibrium with a larger proportion of marketing budget being spent on generating awareness.

Last-click attribution misleads marketers



of consumers use their smartphones to research however



of purchases are on a mobile device

The shift will also highlight the value of mobile

This transition will increase investments in mobile. In a recent interview with Google,¹ Bain & Company's Laura Beaudin speculated that brands significantly underinvest in mobile, because last-click attribution undervalues the impact mobile has on revenue.

Smart marketers are anticipating this trend now, ensuring their content, destinations, and demand generation deliver a seamless experience across devices. While senior US marketers surveyed by The CMO Survey rated mobile marketing's current contribution to company performance at just 2.7 points out of a possible 7, they are still planning significant investments. They forecast that marketing spend on mobile will grow from 5.1% to 11.1% of total marketing budget within the next three years.²



Further reading:

[B2B marketing's move from last-click attribution will drive huge investments in mobile](#) (Blog post)

¹ Source: Google <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/mobile-measurement-challenges-drive-sales-growth.html>

² Source: The CMO Survey https://faculty.fuqua.duke.edu/cmossurveyresults/The_CMO_Survey-Highlights_and_Insights-Feb-2017.pdf

2 GDPR will popularize the Fair Exchange of Value



GDPR will increase investments in customer experience and drive up standards in content marketing – ultimately establishing a new equilibrium for customer acquisition.

GDPR. Four letters that brought fear, panic, and frustration for marketers worldwide during 2017. But smart marketers are sensing the opportunity and building marketing programs that will help them thrive despite tighter regulation.

Tighter controls around opt-in are great for consumers but will prove a short-term headache for marketers: increasing the cost to acquire marketable leads, and thus new customers. As the cost of acquiring new customers rises, marketers will be forced to focus on up-selling and cross-selling to existing customers.

Ragy Thomas, Founder of Sprinklr, believes existing customers represent low-hanging fruit for most businesses. In his Web Summit 2017 presentation,³ he speculated that 80% of revenue for an average company comes from 20% of existing customers.

Taking better care of these customers is, Ragy surmises, a key way to increase revenue. This requires customer care and marketing to be delivered as a unified customer experience.

³Source: YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZq2nZy6XDY>

The content bar will be raised

Delivering great customer experience requires personalized marketing that informs, educates, and stimulates action. Success requires valuable content that resonates with each customer – delivered in the right formats, at the right times, through the right channels.

“Customer care is the new marketing.”

Ragy Thomas, Founder, Sprinklr

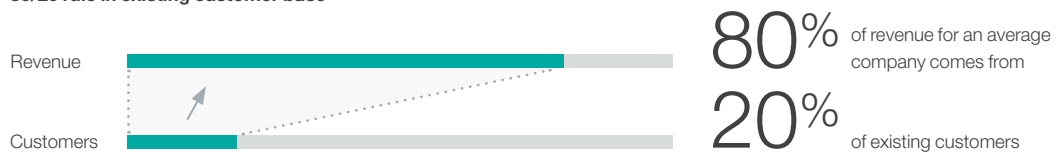
Delivering to such standards requires a detailed and fluid understanding of each customer, and the programmatic use of data to ensure content consistently hits the mark, in the long-term. Brands that fail will lose market share.

A new equilibrium

Raising the quality of content marketing will – ultimately – improve customer acquisition efforts, completing the cycle and establishing a new equilibrium. Delivering more valuable content will provide a stronger incentive to opt-in; more effective nurture combined with increased consumer trust will improve conversion through the funnel.

This should deliver mutual benefits to consumers and businesses. We describe marketers who achieve this as providing a Fair Exchange of Value.

80/20 rule in existing customer base



3 Authenticity is table stakes



Brands are operating in an environment where trust in corporations, advertising, and political leaders is diminishing rapidly. Getting to the truth and being truthful has never mattered more to marketers.

In Edelman's annual Trust Barometer report, President and CEO Richard Edelman bemoaned a global "implosion of trust" in business, government, NGOs, and media – partly fueled by the media circus of fake news. He called for institutions to place the people they serve at the center of everything they do.

Brands that fail to do this will not survive. The days of getting away with extravagant claims that don't stand up to scrutiny are over. Consumers are savvy and more educated, and through digital media they have instant access to peers, influencers, and experts.

2017 Edelman Trust Barometer



In an age of mistrust, brands can only rebuild trust through behavior

Brands can't talk or advertise their way back into consumer's confidence. They need to change the way they behave and not just the messages they communicate.

Rebuilding trust requires behavioral change throughout an organization: from thinking differently about data collection and advertising practices, to understanding how every communication truly resonates with customers and prospects.

A common failure of marketers is following an "any benefit" approach to their investments. For example, while remarketing through display advertising may generate some benefits, what is the long-term impact of alienating customers and prospects through advertising perceived by many as creepy and invasive?

"To rebuild trust and restore faith in the system, institutions must step outside of their traditional roles and work toward a new, more integrated operating model that puts people — and the addressing of their fears — at the center of everything they do."

2017 Edelman Trust Barometer

Don't let technology constrain your marketing

While CRM technology and automation have improved the efficiency of marketing, many brand experiences have become rigidly defined by this technology – and are bland as a result.

Consumers are craving diversity, and smart marketers are reacting to this by creating differentiated experiences rather than being constrained by what technology and standard marketing models can deliver.

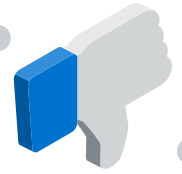
Successful brands will be those that create and share an authentic truth about who they are, what they do, and how they do it. They will deeply understand the consumers they are there to serve and will be in open dialogue with them through multiple channels.



Further reading:

[New Truths for Brands Study 2017](#) (Report)

4 The ad industry sucks and it is costing your business



Media agencies are celebrating exaggerated metrics and award wins. Shouldn't success be defined by your outcomes?

Back in January 2017, P&G Chief Brand Officer Marc Pritchard revealed his media agency had been earning undisclosed commission on media it sold to the company, reselling ad space earned from P&G's money to other clients.

Transparency – or rather, the lack of it – dominated the advertising trade press in 2017. In truth, practices like this have been widespread for years: It's the industry's dirty little secret.

Relying on commission and arbitrage for revenue means media agencies are incentivized to buy in bulk, where they get the best deal. This fails clients and their customers.

Finally, marketers are waking up

Opaque buying systems have permitted agencies to reduce their fees – but their clients pay the price. Relying on commission and arbitrage for revenue means media agencies are incentivized to buy in bulk, where they get the best deal. This fails clients and their customers.

Ex-Mediacom CEO Jon Mandel called this out in his ANA Forum speech in 2015, commenting that media agencies will “recommend or implement media that is off-strategy or off-target if it works for their financial gain.”⁴

“I don’t believe that [the media agencies] have got the best interests of their clients at heart anymore.”⁵

Debbie Morrison, ISBA – The Voice of British Advertisers

Media agencies are designed to fail

Media agencies have backed themselves into a corner. In a recent column for Marketing Week, Mark Ritson speculated that media agencies will be unable to raise their fees again “because they (not client procurement teams) were the main agent in reducing them in the first place.”⁶

Lower fees mean less time to service your account, and less investment in expertise. The results are evident already: media agencies lack knowledge of their clients’ complex audiences, products, and buyer journeys, and they lack the expertise required to understand and act on data. They are left celebrating exaggerated metrics and award wins. Shouldn’t success be defined by your outcomes?

Delivering measurable business impact through demand generation requires deep understanding of your audience and the channels through which to reach them. It demands a relentless focus on outcomes, and smart use of data to optimize performance – across the full customer journey. This is something that media agencies are simply not set up to deliver.

⁴ Source: Ad Age <http://adage.com/article/agency-news/mediacom-ceo-mandel-skewers-agencies-incentives/297470/>

⁵ Source: Financial Times <http://next.ft.com/content/0d98d3ba-0c7b-11e6-9456-444ab5211a2f>

⁶ Source: Marketing Week <https://www.marketingweek.com/2017/10/03/mark-ritson-media-buying/>

5 Emotion is B2B marketing's missing link



Marketers must recognize the importance of emotion in the purchase journey, and make it core to the entire customer journey.

Harvard Business School Professor Gerald Zaltman believes that 95% of purchase decisions take place in our subconscious.

He isn't alone. Douglas Van Praet, Author of *Unconscious Branding: How Neuroscience Can Empower (and Inspire) Marketing*, asserts that "[marketers] fail to recognize that most of the business of life happens through our emotions, below the threshold of awareness."⁸

"Probably 95% of all cognition, all the thinking that drives our decisions and behaviors, occurs unconsciously – and that includes consumer decisions."⁷

Gerald Zaltman, Harvard Business School

⁷ Source: Harvard Business Review <https://hbr.org/2002/06/hidden-minds>

⁸ Source: Fast Company <https://www.fastcompany.com/1682625/the-myth-of-marketing-how-research-reaches-for-the-heart-but-only-connects-with-the-head>

Emotion can transform the customer journey

Your customer experience may be tuned to rational and logical decision making, but is it tuned to the subconscious triggers that build an emotional connection between your brand and your customers?

The key to success in this emotional world is not only uncovering what signals are being evoked in your customers (throughout the entire customer journey), but also understanding how to provide them with the emotions you want them to experience. If you want your customers to feel valued, you need to understand your customers' value systems, their strongly held beliefs, and even their desires. Then apply this understanding to every Customer Experience (CX) touchpoint.

“The most startling truth is we don't even think our way to logical solutions. We feel our way to reason. Emotions are the substrate, the base layer of neural circuitry underpinning even rational deliberation. Emotions don't hinder decisions. They constitute the foundation on which they're made.”

Douglas Van Praet

Visual language is key

One of the most effective methods of understanding your customers is through their reactions and preferences exposed by their relationship to different forms of visual content (both pictures and videos). Similarly, visual content is also able to create lasting and memorable experiences. The reasons are simple. Not only is the old axiom “a picture is worth a thousand words” true, but visuals are the new language of consumers – just ask Snapchat, Instagram or YouTube. This visual language is both rich in human emotion and exposes how we truly perceive the world.

Still to be convinced? In recent research by analyst firm Forrester, emotion was found to be the top contributor to customer loyalty in 94% of industries studied, even surpassing effectiveness and ease of use.⁹

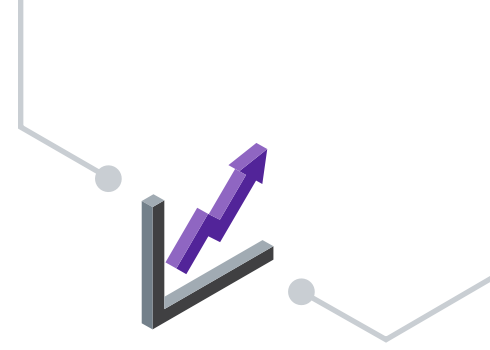


Further reading:

[Improve the customer journey and increase audience insight through visual language](#) (Report)

⁹Source: Forrester <https://go.forrester.com/wp-content/uploads/Forrester-Predictions-Spotlight-On-CX-Helps-And-Hurts.pdf>

6 Be data smart, not data led



Data analysis is a core component of the modern marketing mix. It should aim to inform, improve, and measure – but not dictate – marketing investments.

In a recent Marketing Week column Mark Ritson lambasted the rise of the Spreadsheet Jockey, painting a picture of a monotone world where marketing leaders can choose data analysis or the fundamentals, but not both.¹⁰

The reality, of course, is very different. Maximizing the value of marketing investments requires both sides of the coin: marketing programs should be built on both sound fundamentals and the smart use of data to inform, improve, and measure activity.

Marketers who are arrogant enough to think they can succeed with only one piece of the puzzle are making an obvious mistake. Why would you disregard decades of proven marketing theory, or ignore the mass of behavioral information provided by modern marketing platforms and technology?

¹⁰Source: Marketing Week <https://www.marketingweek.com/2017/09/20/mark-ritson-collapse-marketing-funnel/>

Behavioral data are an intelligence source that cannot be ignored

Max van der Heijden, User Experience & Conversion Specialist at Google, stresses the importance of real-world behavioral data to marketers: “Even though you may read that other people have done something that works very well for them, that doesn’t mean that it will work well for you ... There’s only one way to tell: You’ve got to test it.”¹¹

This approach should extend across the entire customer journey – with a programmatic approach to testing, adapting, and correcting your campaigns as they run.

“Data don’t dictate anything; data simply promote imaginative thinking. It’s not the information that drives a result, it’s how managers interpret that information.”¹²

Gerald Zaltman, Harvard Business School

Generating insight requires statistical expertise

The data you collect, however, are meaningless without context and analysis. Generating significant insight from data requires both marketing and statistical expertise.

Data analysts have become an integral part of the marketing function, as marketing leaders recognize the need for skilled resources. But marketing teams also need data interpreters: marketers who are inquisitive and motivated by numbers, who can bridge the two worlds.

This need is particularly acute in B2B marketing, with smaller audiences, extended purchase cycles and so many touch points on the customer journey – both online and offline. Combining and analyzing data from demand generation, website analytics, marketing automation, and CRM requires sound statistical expertise – but also a core knowledge of the customer. When the stakes are so high, the wrong insight can often be worse than having no insight at all.

Don’t be led by data alone. Instead, build a team that is data smart: able to combine data analysis with the marketing fundamentals to demonstrate – and maximize – business impact.

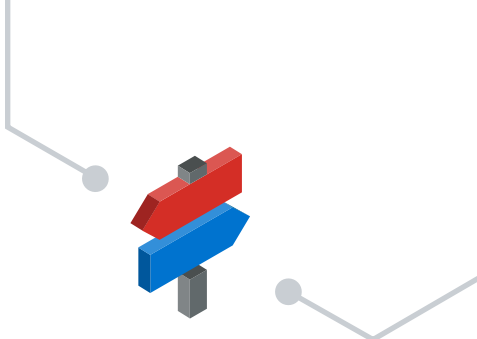


Further reading:

[The data opportunity: 4 essential steps for B2B marketers](#)
(Blog post)

¹¹ Source: Google <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-resources/data-measurement/benefits-of-failure-marketing-analytics/>

¹² Source: Harvard Business Review <https://hbr.org/2002/06/hidden-minds>



7 Social has split in two (and there's no going back)

Social media is a mature marketing channel that has split into two distinct disciplines: social media communications and social media marketing.

In last year's B2B Marketing Trends report, we spoke about social media having grown up as a marketing channel: a fully-fledged member of the marketing mix, and an effective route through which to reach B2B audiences online.

The realization of social media as a mature marketing channel – and not a mystical entity to be treated individually – has led brands to approach it more seriously. This has led to the emergence of two distinct disciplines.

Earlier social media KPIs such as “building a community” and “fostering conversation” have become minimal to the point of irrelevance.

Social media conversations have aligned to customer support

Brand communications through social media have become more closely aligned to PR – and objectives around awareness and perception. Earlier social media KPIs such as “building a community” and “fostering conversation” have become minimal to the point of irrelevance, and the bulk of B2B organic outreach is now akin to publishing press releases to your website. A good thing to do, but not something that generates a measurable impact.

And while brands need to be ready to respond and deal with incoming queries, most often the conversation is quickly moved into more traditional customer service channels.

“Global advertising expenditure in social media will grow 72% between 2016 and 2019, rising from US\$29bn to US\$50bn.”

Zenith Advertising Expenditure Forecasts

Marketing through social media is dependent on paid promotion

The business impact of organic B2B social media outreach is severely limited, and generating valuable outcomes on a consistent basis requires paid promotion. This is evidenced by huge increases in spend on social media advertising, which is forecast to overtake global newspaper advertising in 2020.¹³

Paid investment does not guarantee success, however. Digital demand generation is an all-or-none process. If you get a single element wrong across the customer journey your investment can be wasted.

B2B marketing leaders must build the right teams for both jobs

These distinct disciplines require different skillsets, different content, and different approaches to measurement. The onus is on marketing leaders to determine what mix of each is required for their business – and providing the investments required to deliver.

¹³ Source: Zenith <https://www.zenithmedia.com/social-media-ads-hit-us50bn-2019-catching-newspapers/>

Closing thoughts

We hope our analysis of these marketing trends has proved informative, giving you actionable insight for your marketing strategy in 2018.

The pace of change in marketing is unyielding. Understanding key platforms, tools, and techniques is key to driving measurable value for your brand – so make sure you have the appetite and resources required.

If you'd like to discuss these trends in more detail, please get in touch. And if you're curious to learn more, you'll find a host of blog and long-form content at [**www.metia.com**](http://www.metia.com).

About Metia

Metia Group is a global marketing agency with offices in London, Seattle, Austin, and Singapore. We employ some 140 marketing professionals; each is expert in a particular area of specialization.

Our clients include big corporations and ambitious businesses. We provide them with structured marketing programs that reach across geographies, scale massively, can be deployed systematically, and are measured relentlessly.

Metia has specialist services designed to support our clients in the areas of Insight, Demand, Content and Advocacy. These services are based upon deep expertise, proven methodologies, and are enabled by unique tools and systems.

To learn more about our capabilities and discuss how we could help you reach and engage your target audiences with focused, measurable campaigns, please contact us at info@metia.com.

Metia Group


 metia.com

 [@metia](https://twitter.com/metia)

 facebook.com/MetiaGroup


 linkedin.com/metia

EMEA

 +44 (0)20 3100 3500


 info@metia.com

North America

 +1 425 629 5800

 infoUSA@metia.com

Asia

 +65 6224 7992

 info@metia.com