

Digital trends in 2017

From artificial intelligence to rising data intelligence and brand safety, the IAB South Africa council heads have alerted the industry to the latest digital marketing trends for this year.



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With 2017 well into its second half here is a list of trends that have been preoccupying the minds of the IAB councils. The trends were curated by the IAB South Africa from its council heads, including: IAB head of marketing council - Anna Vulina, head of customer experience, Showmax; IAB CEO, Josephine Buys; IAB head of publisher council - Marc du Plessis, joint CEO, Spark Media; IAB head of media innovation council - Mike Carter, special projects director, Maxaxion; head of IAB agency council - Paula Hulley, head of digital and innovation, Ogilvy CT; head of measurement council - Ryan Smit, chief strategy officer, Silverstone Group; and IAB regulatory affairs council - Pria Chetty, director, Endcode.

1. Artificial intelligence and machine learning

Artificial intelligence or AI is the 'big data' buzzword of 2017. Everyone is talking about it but very few businesses are actually doing anything with AI in the South African space. We're seeing the big internet companies using AI to assist in many of the operational tasks such as recommendations and cross selling, with South African companies following suit. There have been many severe warnings from the likes of Elon Musk about the progression of AI and this is a hot topic for all, from marketers to CTOs and data managers. This is closely followed by machine learning to understand how best improve customer understanding.

2. The rise and rise of growth teams

Globally, over the past couple of years, the notion of growth teams has risen - a mixture of marketers, engineers and analytics to organise themselves in either direct or virtual teams responsible for growth in a company. A lot of the digital companies have figured out the best way to take this forward and how to bring technology and marketers closer together.

3. Moving creative closer to the business

More corporates and brands are beginning to move creative in house. This gives brands the opportunity to make creative part of the problem solving and thinking, and closer to the business. The days of Mad Men are gone. Creative needs to be as accountable for the ROI as digital marketing.

4. Getting personal with CRM

Every customer is an individual and should be treated as such. Brands are taking the opportunity to connect with customers through one-on-one messaging and smart market segmentation. Businesses also realise that customers are discerning and can be lost in seconds with an ineffective customer journey. The trend underpinning all these developments is the need to present to customers at the right time using the right channels.

5. Overlapping target markets

With rising data intelligence, customers can be found at the places where certain non-competitive brands intersect. For example, a luxury car brand and a luxury watch brand may combine their digital assets to capture their audiences for retargeting purposes, but could also then trade their audiences between themselves in order to cross sell each other's products.

6. The digital economy needs to be nurtured to survive

While digital seems to be a booming segment that doesn't seem to need any help to grow, regulatory institutions need to fight for its sustainability and fair use. Members of the digital media need to actively participate in tech law and policy setting to prevent stifling regulation. Securing freedom of speech online, access to information and reasonable privacy regulation will continue to dominate the agenda of the Regulatory Affairs Council within the IAB SA. Practical copyright law and continued promotion of the need for self-regulation of digital sectors will remain important regulatory pursuits.

7. Programmatic ad spend in overdrive

Despite the bad press received this year, programmatic continues to go into overdrive. Tighter control over the programmatic landscape is all part of a maturing industry, hence the rise of technology to analyse the value of digital advertising placements, coupled with the rise of the [private marketplaces](#) and direct buys almost doubling in media spend in the last year in response to the open exchanges' seeming lack of transparency.

Agencies accessing these deals via [SSPs](#) and taking advantage of data rich audiences traversing across multiple devices and platforms, with [AI](#) stringing together complex algorithms to help us learn about our consumer and their habits and hopefully deliver something of value.

[Spotify](#) now has full suite programmatic offerings, from display, video to most recently, audio. [Outfront Media's](#) is taking outdoor programmatic: inventory includes subway ads, bus ads, as well as static and digital billboards; and TV looks already set with those digital channels that are geared for this type of media transaction, allowing targeting across very specific customer segments.

8. Context is king

While content (AKA video!) might always be king, context is the key to the castle. In our customer-centric digital landscape, understanding the context your consumer is key. Trying to adjust our communication without listening to the customer is like talking to a friend after they have put down the phone and then expecting a reply.

We are already automating our delivery of profile centered communication; deepening our learning to better understand who the customer is; enabling a more meaningful conversation; and delivering a better experience, utility, product or benefit. Coupled with an ongoing understanding of a customer's context, we will be able to deliver that message, solution or benefit at the right place, at the right time, in the right format, on the right device, in an even more meaningful and remarkable way.

9. Defending brand integrity

From a publisher perspective, brand safety is a critical contributor to a healthy digital eco-system. While countering fake news is a challenge, the IAB believes this also presents an opportunity. The introduction of ad filters will effectively counter the rise of fake news and fraudulent websites that are giving digital advertising a bad name, and defrauding unsuspecting advertisers of their ad budgets.

IAB publisher members spend a tremendous amount of time and money generating high quality, brand safe content, coupled with responsible advertising options that do not annoy users, giving advertisers quality, brand safe environments within which to place their brands. The quality of ad space needs to come to the forefront over quantity of ad space. In summary, digital is becoming more personal, specialised and reactive to customer needs than ever before. If we work to keep digital platforms fair and communicate with the customers we serve, we will continue to create an inspiring, innovative digital advertising industry.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The [[<https://www.bizcommunity.com/PressOffice/IABSouthAfrica> IAB South Africa]] is a member-driven organisation that promotes digital growth. We are an independent, voluntary, non-profit association focused on growing and sustaining a vibrant and profitable digital industry within South Africa. The IAB SA currently represents more than 200 members including online publishers, brands and educational institutions, as well as creative, media and digital agencies. Our aim is to provide our members with a platform where they can engage and interact with each other and address digital issues of common interest, thereby stimulating learning and growth within the South African digital space. The IAB SA represents the South African digital industry to all sectors, including the marketing community, the media, the South African government and the public.

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