

Digital marketing trends for 2017 (part 3)

By  Stephen Sandmann

20 Feb 2017

In part three of my exploration of digital marketing in 2017, I delve into subjects I haven't covered yet, such as apps, B2B and tracking ROI digital marketing trends, and share more insight into other trends.

I caught up with Lana Strydom, EHOD: Digital, Content and Social Marketing at [Vodacom South Africa](#); Jeanine Ferreira, Senior Portfolio Manager: Digital Marketing at Vodacom South Africa; Justin Spratt, Head of Business: Sub-Saharan Africa at [Uber](#); Michel Holworthy, Senior Specialist: Online Marketing at Vodacom South Africa; and Terence Gomes Rei, Specialist: Digital Marketing at Vodacom South Africa.



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How will digital marketing ROI be measured?

We live in challenging times from a macro-economic perspective, so it's no surprise that companies are scrutinising marketing ROI more than ever before, while digital marketing – which is no different – will be stepped up in 2017.

Here's an example: Google's research revealed that about 92% of product-related Google searches on cellphones lead to a product being purchased, and this does make sense. This subsequent purchase may take place in-store. However, this sale may not have been attributed to the product-related search marketing efforts, which should have been the case. Digital marketing spend must accurately reflect its offline effect on consumer buyer behaviour.

Jeanine Ferreira believes that 2017 will be the year of attribution: "Attribution modelling will become more sophisticated, and more companies will start working on online-to-offline attribution. Google and Facebook are working hard to implement this in South Africa through satellite and beacon technology."

Can traditional marketing boost digital marketing's effectiveness?

There is definite symbiosis at play. Traditional marketing such as TV and radio ads play an important role in helping to generate online buzz, and often act as an overall catalyst for marketing success. Digital marketers would see this impact in the form of a sudden increase in the number of related Google searches and website visits.

Jeanine shares her thoughts: “TV, and especially radio, will contribute to digital’s success and vice versa. Combining these different marketing channels will add another dimension to marketing in 2017. This, combined with a more robust understanding and implementation of data brings us closer to customized marketing – probably the only reason consumers will not install ad-blockers on their devices.”



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Apps need to provide more value

Most brands want their own apps, but is there a proper value proposition for these apps to exist?

Terence shares his perspective: “As the South African market steadily moves towards being mobile-focused, the competition for downloads is on. According to a study conducted by research giant Nielson, the average smartphone user has 27 apps on their phone, and if you want your app to be one of them, then you best be creating value for the end-user.

Undoubtedly, 2017 will see increased innovation in apps through the likes of AI, virtual reality, IoT and wearable technology which provides users with tools they may not even be aware that they need or want just yet. But it’s not enough to have an app that only has cool gimmicks. If it’s not helping the end-user in some way, then it’s likely to sit on their phone inactive until one day they realise that they do not use it and inevitably delete it. Go innovative, but keep it relevant.”

Content marketing's prominence will grow

I touched on this slightly in [part 1](#) but Lana Strydom gives us deep insight into the subject: "The concept of brand as publisher has been prevalent for the last few years, but we're now seeing some serious movement in this space. Content marketing plays a significant role at the top and middle of the conversion funnel, driving awareness and engagement while often providing information and education around complex products and services. Data-driven content that enhances the customer experience along the various stages of brand engagement is going to drive a significant change in approach to content production.

"Measurement and attribution models which show the contribution of content marketing to brand and commercial objectives are going to draw significant focus. In line with demand from major brands, we've seen some specialised content marketing agencies develop, often straddling hybrid publisher-agency roles."

What about B2B digital marketing in 2017?

This type of digital marketing is not often in the limelight, but it's intriguing nonetheless. B2B marketers will continue to win with LinkedIn this year. Online content's importance will continue to expand for B2B marketers.

Justin Spratt has fascinating ideas about where B2B digital marketing will go in 2017: "I think email will see a continued rebirth, specifically in the B2B space. Business buyers increasingly procure through a consumer lens, so much of the B2C ideas will extend to this category. This means social signalling, backed by emails with direct calls to action, will work – a simple mechanic but very hard to get right. But get it right, and suddenly that tight marketing budget looks abundant."

Michel Holworthy said: "B2B content marketers believe that content marketing is one of the most effective lead-generation channels today. Lead generation and website traffic are some of the top goals and metrics in content marketing in 2017. Most B2B companies are more concerned about getting more potential clients and find tremendous value in personalised touchpoints."

That's it for digital marketing trends for 2017. Let's conquer digital marketing this year knowing that it's full of exciting opportunities and challenges too. Be resilient, be a risk-taker and most of all, be curious!

Read more: [Digital marketing trends for 2017 \(part 1\)](#)

Read more: [Digital marketing trends for 2017 \(part 2\)](#)

ABOUT STEPHEN SANDMANN

I have a keen interest in innovative, digital marketing-lead advertising and search marketing (SEO and paid search), which I've developed through my award-winning agency and corporate career at Ogilvy, Quirk (now Mrum), Vodacom and now a specialist digital marketing consultant at Sandmann Digital.

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