

Trends 2018: Omnichannel is the new normal

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As smart technology enters our homes, cars, work and leisure time, marketers have the opportunity to innovate and reach potential customers via ever-expanding touch points. No purchasing decision is too small and omnichannel marketing is the new normal in 2018.



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Shopping: mobile integration

The future of shopping will be phygital as we see options to purchase in both the physical and digital realms. Mobile is the common denominator between customer retail experiences. Deloitte in the US reports that more than [90% of consumers](#) now use their phones in the shopping process.

According to Think With Google people are also using their phones as an “in-store research adviser” with a massive [82% of smartphone users](#) saying they consult their phones on purchases they're going to make in a store. Online shopping South Africa is forecasted to grow to over [R53 billion in 2018](#) and it is estimated there will be over 21 million active smartphone users here within the next five years so mobile shopping integration is an imperative for marketers in 2018.

Home: your voice is your command

The Annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) was held recently in Las Vegas and the home of the future is truly something to behold with everything geared towards a technologically integrated lifestyle. The dominant tech feature of 2018 is voice assisted integration, the question is, whose voice- OK Google, Siri, Alexa or Cortana?

For marketers, this means relooking at their brand platforms to ensure they are optimised for voice search. For an idea of how big this is and is going to become Google Assistant is now available on over [400 million devices](#), and the global predictions, summed up by Branded3 are:

- “50% of all searches will be voice searches by 2020.” – comScore
- “About 30% of searches will be done without a screen by 2020.” – Mediapos
- “We estimate there will be 21.4 million smart speakers in the US by 2020.” – Activate
- “By 2019, the voice recognition market will be a \$601m industry.” – Technavio via Skyword.

Social media: personalisation

It's only natural that in 2018 we might start yearning for more "human" interaction. How can social media help? By becoming more personalised. Social is going to need to reassure the user (if they want to keep them) that they know them better than Siri or Alexa does. The days of marketers churning out generic content are almost over.

On the upside, marketers have the skills and tools to create content which is genuinely useful and ads which reach the correct target market. In terms of personalisation, INC.com mentions "[Social Listening](#)" as one of the trends this year, and I agree. Analytics need to be more than tracking growth; they need to monitor what people are saying and act on the feedback. Ironically, it's Chatbots which will give customers some of the personalisation they're looking for. There are at least [100 000 monthly active bots](#) on Facebook Messenger and a staggering two billion messages are exchanged between brands and audiences each month.

2018 is going to be the year of the consumer and by extension, time to make your brand's omnichannel presence a strategic priority.

ABOUT JAINITA KHATRI

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