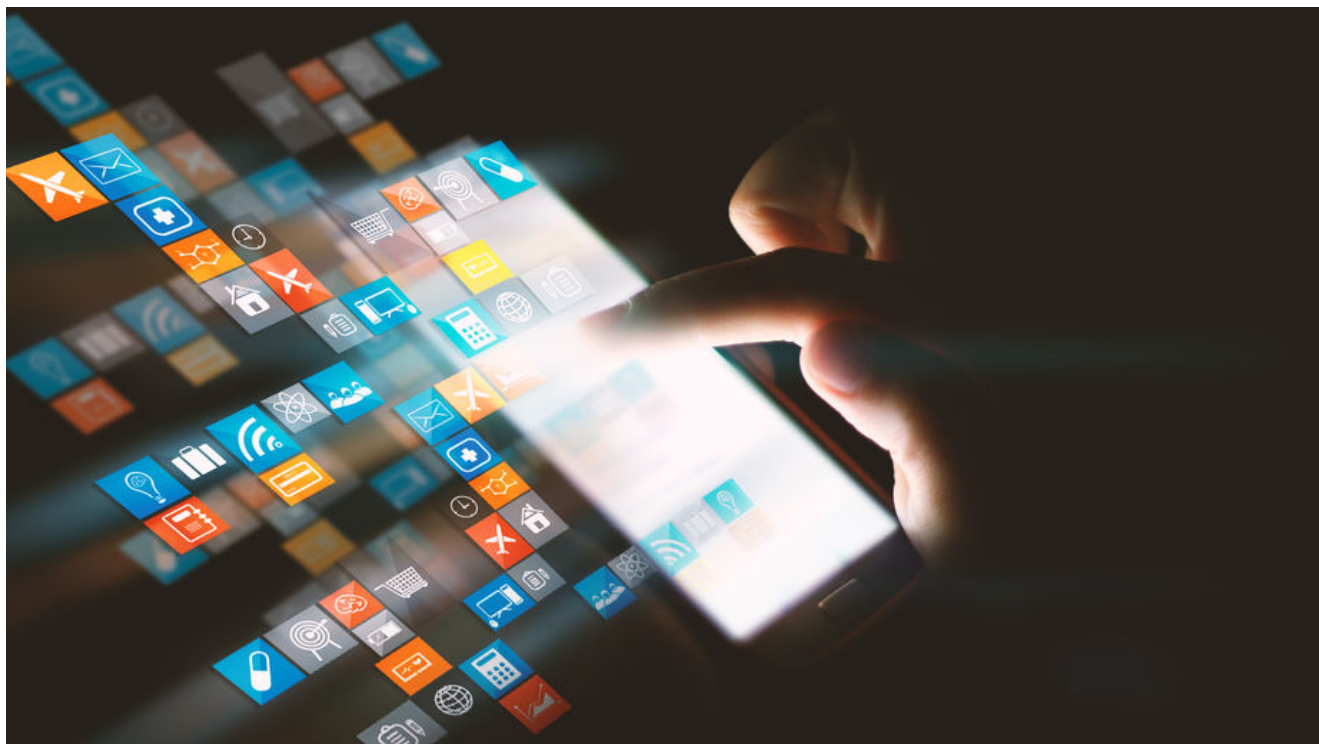


Social Media And Content Marketing Trends You Want to be Using

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As competing for user attention with content and social media marketing gets more challenging, keeping up with the latest trends is essential for achieving ROI on your campaigns.

According to a [recent survey of 344 social media managers](#), almost 80% of businesses use social media to post original content. Yet, just a little over half (52%) say that they achieve revenue growth through their social efforts.

What is this half doing right? They pay close attention not just to social's role in their marketing funnel strategy, but they also track emerging trends to stay on the cusp of social relevance. By reading the signs of the times, they can adjust their strategy to keep their social media marketing effective and achieving consistent positive ROI.

To help your business stay on top, here are four social content marketing trends you can keep track of to make your social activities a lucrative component of your overall marketing mix.

Social Media And Content Marketing Trends You Want to be Using

Social Listening More Important for Guiding Strategy, Finding Lead Gen Opportunities



Social listening has been used in the past for two main things: establishing the current conversation surrounding a brand's reputation and finding moments to surprise and delight consumers.

As more of our society's most important conversations move to social media, social listening has evolved to become more akin to market research. Rather than just gathering brand sentiment data or springing marketing speak on random mentions, brands are actively prospecting for leads, gathering critical feedback data, and developing whole campaigns around becoming a part of social conversations.

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A study from Clutch shows that [1 in 4 businesses use social listening to improve their products and service](#). 42% try to improve customer relationships, while 86% monitor ongoing customer requests, issues, questions and concerns.

Social listening has also spread from the typical confines of Facebook and Twitter to Instagram, YouTube and even Reddit.

When employing social listening for your own purposes, make sure the data you gather is shared across your entire operation. Make note of ongoing complaints regarding your brands, and also look for opportunities within subjects related to the pain points your product solves. Build your social media brand awareness and lead generation campaigns around this data for maximum effectiveness.

For example, [Kleenex monitored social media](#) for posts about someone declaring they were fighting an illness. A representative then contacted friends and family members of the person to coordinate a “Kleenex Kit” surprise package filled with get-well items.

The campaign not only helped create social buzz and generate positive conversations, but Kleenex was also able to gather data on how people cope with illness as well as rates of sickness reported through social.

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Snapchat, Instagram Stories and Other Ephemeral Content Come to Center Stage



More brands are embracing the use of ephemeral content in their marketing strategy. “Ephemeral content” refers to social media posts that disappear after a limited time. For instance, Snapchat posts sent directly to followers disappear quickly after being viewed. Snapchat Story and Instagram Story posts disappear after 24 hours of being posted.

Many brands considered these platforms and temporary content types impractical or difficult to get a hang of. But, they have a strong motivation to rethink this impression, especially if they have a sizeable market within younger demographics.

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Pew Research reveals that [78% of 18-24 year olds use Snapchat every single day](#). 71% of these users visit the platform multiple times daily! Similarly, Instagram has enjoyed an increase in daily users from 51% to 60% since introducing their “Stories” feature.

Why do younger demographics like this type of content so much? “Much of Snapchat’s value comes from its support of mundane, everyday conversation among close friends,” concludes [a recent study conducted at Cornell](#).

Ephemeral content users value the authenticity and intimacy that comes from having impermanent conversations. Instead of people broadcasting a highly polished, idealized version of themselves that will be enshrined forever on a server, they can feel like they are casually chatting with friends.

Businesses wanting to use the platforms should keep this feeling in mind when they share ephemeral content. Try to only share distinctly human moments or genuinely exciting temporary offers to your followers. For more standard promotions, you can post to your Story, which allows people to opt-in with viewing rather than being force-fed messages.

What kind of ephemeral content works best?

- Promotional discounts or events that end after the post disappears
- Special offers personalized towards a specific follower group
- “Slice of life” moments during your operations, such as a hearty “good morning” or a picture of a butterfly landing on your windowsill
- [Geofilter marketing](#), which can be used to create gamified promotions

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More Companies Looking to Partner with Micro-Influencers in Their Niche

Social media is becoming a launchpad for product discovery. Since popular accounts in communities have the most followers and therefore the most exposure potential, product recommendations from these accounts can quickly catapult awareness and demand.

Nearly [40% of Twitter users claim they have bought a product after a recommendation from someone they follow](#). That's likely why [56% of brands say that influencer marketing can improve how people see them](#), and [48% plan on increasing their influencer marketing budgets in 2018](#).

However, not just any influencer collaboration will work. Look for accounts that hold attention and sway from their followers but that aren't full-blown social celebrities. These "micro-influencers" typically have less than a million followers and [much higher engagement rates from their audience](#).

Also, look to data from your audiences and who they tend to look to for content in their specific community. "It really depends on individual brands' target audiences, and who those audiences trust," [explains one apparel brand CEO](#).

Make sure to use social listening to look out for influencer opportunities that can land in your lap. As an example, professional artist [Matt Cummings](#) began posting adorable drawings made with Posca paint pens, and other artists like [PaperBeatsScissors](#) took up the medium with fantastic results.

Now, [Posca Markers are a trending topic](#), with users saying things like "I feel like my entire twitter feed this week has been an elaborate conspiracy to [get me to buy those posca paint markers](#)." Yet, the brand Uni has so far failed to take notice of the traction they are getting nor recognize an opportunity with Cummings for collaboration.

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Millennial Demographics Mature, Demanding More Nuanced Segmentation Strategies



“Those darn millennials” — as some of your relatives may be fond of calling them — are officially growing up. Millennial parents are now [responsible for 80% of the U.S.’s annual 4 million births](#), for instance.

What this all means is that lumping your 25-34 year old demographic into a few standard categories is no longer going to cut it. Instead, you must recognize the differing interests, values, and subsequent purchase motivators that drive your audience behaviors.

For instance, instead of just creating a fun, youthful campaign with pop art or a “green” campaign using nature imagery, research what specific types of art or environmental causes your millennial audiences care about most.

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Gathering social data on your audiences' demographics and interest categories can help you create more accurate segments that mirror actual traits, not generational stereotypes. Then, you [can build out personas](#) based on these segments to target each piece of social content to a real category within your customer base.

“If you’re creating a campaign for a brand or product, it’s imperative to know who you’re speaking to, which users will be most engaged, and the users who will drive the success of this campaign,” [urges Yuval Ben-Itzhak](#), CEO of Socialbakers. “In the past, this was done by guesswork or agency studies, but today it’s almost happening in real time.”

New Social Media Marketing Trends Mean Expanding Your Purview and Closely Monitoring Your Unique Datasets

If there is one persistent theme within all of these emerging social media marketing and content trends for 2018, it’s that brands are trying new things and not taking their strategy for granted.

By branching out and using your own data as a divining rod, you can guide your marketing strategy towards developing true relationships and inspiring behaviors among your audiences. That is the best way to achieve social media marketing success in the current times.