

12 Communications Trends You Need to Know

White Paper

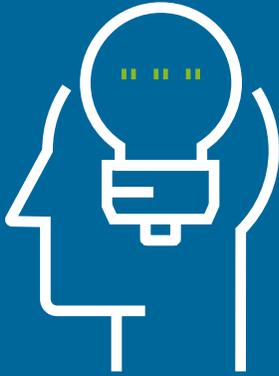
*Strategic and Creative
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12 Communications Trends You Need to Know

Communication is the heartbeat of business. Connecting with key audiences and stakeholders has always been about reaching “the right people in the right place at the right time.” Now, in this era of multiple media and connector interfaces that are constantly changing, there is an inescapable need to stay on top of the latest communications technology and tactics. Here’s our latest take on the most important trends in market communications.

01 Brand is still the main podium on the stage.



Modern technology has changed the tools, tactics and channels, but brand equity remains the platform for all marketing communications.

In a new world of personal customization and multiplied choices, we have more information than ever and less time to absorb it. Our decisions rely more than ever on associations and symbols. And that's what brand is—the emotional feeling and trust we have before the buying decision moves into the rational realm. Products have life cycles; brand lives on. And it remains the most important asset on the company balance sheet.

02 Content marketing is not optional.

The art of communications has always been about creating and telling stories.

Now, global interconnection has upped the ante. Content marketing should no longer be considered an “additional” part of marketing strategies. It is central to brand-building, lead generation and new customer acquisition.

In a world in which we are inundated with information, it’s the content that comes from familiar and valued sources that we trust the most. In short, instead of pitching your products or services, good content attracts prospects by delivering valuable information and making them smarter. And who doesn’t want to be smarter?

How do you produce content with a limited budget? By working smarter, not harder. Prioritize the repurposing of your content. This allows you to deliver content to different audiences via a variety of channels, reinforce your message and create a robust content catalog, all while making the most of your time and money.

03 Social media is fickle.



The social media landscape changes daily, making it difficult to know how to best invest your marketing resources. Which social channels are gaining momentum and which will soon be known as a fad (see MySpace, Google+, Friendster)?

In this world of uncertainty, here's what we do know. Facebook has shown staying power across all age groups, and regardless of your industry, there's a spot for you there. And while some newer, more specific platforms, such as Twitch or TikTok, resonate with niche younger audiences, they can't compete with [the top-used social platforms of 2020](#):

- **Facebook:** 2.45 billion active monthly users
- **Instagram:** 1 billion active monthly users
- **Snapchat:** 360 million active monthly users
- **Twitter:** 330 million active monthly users
- **LinkedIn:** 310 million active monthly users

04 Programmatic continues to climb to the top.

According to ZenithOptimedia's "Programmatic Marketing Forecast" report, [programmatic ad spend will reach \\$98 billion in 2020](#). To put that in other terms, that's 68% of all global digital media ad spend. Mobile has been a key driver of this growth.

Programmatic advertising is the automation of buying and selling advertisements in real time to ensure an ad is delivered to those "right people" we talked about earlier.

"Programmatic buying is becoming more popular as marketers increasingly take an audience-centric approach to their display ad buys," [said eMarketer senior analyst Lauren Fisher](#). "Publishers are becoming more comfortable with programmatic technology, and therefore more willing and able to package audiences in this manner. That has accelerated spending in mobile and other formats that have traditionally shied away from programmatic, such as video."

A few current programmatic trends to keep an eye on include digital out-of-home with mobile location data, voice-activated out-of-home ads and artificial intelligence (AI), which leverages adaptable interpretation to increase speed and scale in moving consumers along in the purchase journey.

05 Video is the new gateway for reaching customers.



Video has become the best way to reach online browsers, and this trend is driving marketers to re-think how they connect with their target audiences.

From 78% in 2015 up to 92% in 2020, marketers are indicating that [video is increasingly important to their overall strategy](#). And for good reason. In 2019, global consumers watched, on average, 84 minutes of online video per day. This should come as no surprise when you consider that YouTube is not simply a website. It is a search engine, and it is, in fact, the second largest search engine after Google.

The shift to online video has upped the ante on measurement. Whereas traditional television relies on measurement services such as Nielsen to provide viewing data—which is not ad-specific—online video performance can be measured for ads in real time. Metrics such as view-through rate, click-through rate, watch time and shares allow us to optimize our video and placements to make the most of our ad spend.

06 Email remains a mainstay.



With 3.9 billion daily email users and an expected jump to 4.3 billion by 2023, email remains the dominant way of sharing information.

And according to Statista, it's estimated there will be over 347 billion emails sent and received each day by 2023.

From 2019–2020, 78% of marketers had seen an increase in email engagement, according to [this HubSpot article](#). Furthermore, those who segmented their customer lists saw a 760% increase in revenue.

Email is inexpensive, targeted, immediate and profitable. And it is also underutilized by most. Gleanster Research reports that half of all leads aren't ready to buy. Email provides companies the opportunity to nurture these leads with brand reminders, rewards offers or cost-saving deals with the goal of turning that lead into a conversion.

07 Direct mail is more effective than ever.



Whenever we discover shiny new toys, we are quick to discard the old. But marketers who have tossed direct mail onto the scrap heap should look again. With everything going online, there's more clutter in our inbox than our mailbox. It's practically a novelty now to receive a personal letter via snail mail. That means less volume and higher message penetration. In fact, in 2018, [the direct mail response rate was 9% for house lists](#)—now that's something to write home about!

To get not only the highest response rate, but the highest quality response rate, consider creating your own targeted, segmented mailing lists with the customer data you already have rather than buying data from a third party.

Direct mail isn't back. Turns out it never went anywhere.

08 Number...zero? Yes, when it comes to SEO.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving readability and visibility of your website to rank for relevant search queries.

This includes practices such as keyword optimization in title tags, meta descriptions and content; creating content relevant to search queries; accounting for the user experience, including page load time and mobile optimization; and more.

So how do you get seen on search engines?

Zero isn't often a number we strive for in business, but when it comes to your search engine results page (SERP) ranking, that's what you should aim for. Position zero is the prime location for your business, providing a valuable "featured snippet" of information in addition to the link from which it came. This is often the only search result consumers view before moving on from their query. The position also affects voice search, which, according to SCORE, [58% of consumers use voice search to find information on local businesses.](#)

09 Consumer trust is down, so authenticity is needed more than ever.

To build trust, we need to create authentic, purposeful, relatable content to stay in the good graces of our consumers.

Authenticity is vital to success in a world where [81% of consumers say trust in brands affects purchase behavior](#) but only 34% say they trust most of the brands they purchase. To build trust, we need to create authentic, purposeful, relatable content to stay in the good graces of our consumers.

But what does it mean to be “authentic”? It’s about building relationships. People want to feel a mutual connection with a brand rather than just being told what the brand can do for them.

So consider how your brand fits into consumers’ lives. And how your consumers fit into your brand. Don’t be generic. Create a consistent, established vision. In particular, you’ll need to build your advertising around that connection to reach elusive younger generations.

10 Influencer marketing is on the rise.



Word-of-mouth has always been considered the best form of advertising, but it grows leaps and bounds when coming from someone selected by you to amplify your brand's message. This is because influencers are considered more authentic and trustworthy than brands. In fact, [63% of consumers trust the opinions of influencers more than the opinions of brands themselves.](#)

With the increasing popularity of existing social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, and with new platforms such as TikTok on the rise, the sky is the limit for available content on the Internet. And with so much content in the social abyss, brands run into the dilemma of reaching the right people. By incorporating influencer marketing into a strategy, brands are able to reach consumers effectively by promoting their products or services through a person their audience trusts and engages with every day.

11 TV is still the traditional king.

According to the [2019 Q1 Nielsen Total Audience Report](#), U.S. adults spend an average of 11 hours and 27 minutes per day connected to media. Of that time, an average 3 hours and 53 minutes is spent watching live television. That's 34%! With live television being consumed more than any other media (even mobile apps/web, at 3:01), TV isn't going anywhere.

Although it's often rumored, delayed viewing of television through a recording player doesn't negatively affect your ad's number of views. According to research by Nielsen and Magna Global, only 50% of U.S. households have recording capabilities, and of that percentage, only 10% of all television consumption is via recording. Further, only 65% of those shows are fast-forwarded through ads, meaning only 3% of total TV ad impressions are avoided through fast-forwarding. This small percentage is outweighed by the continued consumption of television across all demographics.

Streaming still remains a channel to watch, playing into the phenomenon of binge-watching, with over 42% of viewers binge-watching multiple episodes one to two times per month. However, connected TV (CTV) and over-the-top (OTT) viewing should not be seen as a threat to traditional television. OTT (also known as your favorite streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime) allows for precise audience targeting, frequency capping and A/B testing at very cost-effective rates, which makes it a great companion to traditional TV. The two can work effectively together in tandem to produce results among a broader audience.

12 Radio is under assault, but is still effective.

While there are more “radio” options these days, including streaming and online radio platforms such as Pandora and Spotify, you may be surprised to know that local AM/FM radio has largely retained its presence as a media influence in people’s lives over the last decade. In fact, according to the 2018 Q2 Nielsen Total Audience Report, [radio still reaches 227 million adults 5 days a week, on average.](#)

Radio is also effective for recall of other ad placements when coupled with additional channels, such as television, for a campaign. Nielsen found that in a radio campaign for an automotive dealership, [consumers who had heard the radio ad had a 35% higher awareness](#) of the television ad than those who had only seen the television ad.

There is a misconception that traditional radio should only be used to target older demos because millennials are spending all their time on their devices. While online radio platforms are becoming increasingly prevalent, 93% of millennials are still reached by AM/FM radio each week.

The message in all of this? There are marketing scenarios for which radio is very effective. Brands should not consider online and streaming platforms as a threat to AM/FM radio, but as complementary facets of the media mix used to reach their target audience.



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