thunder::tech
integrated marketing for a connected world

10 YEARS

MARKETING TRENDS

the futurist's field guide

howdy!

We are incredibly proud to present to you thunder::tech's annual marketing trends book, especially because this is our 10th year of publishing trends that middle-market and lower-enterprise brands need to be paying attention to.

Since we started doing this a decade ago, we have continued to track and publish trends applicable to today's marketplace and explained what is approaching around the corner to help you accelerate your brand—and this year is no different.

Keep up on the changing dynamics of data and privacy expectations, the huge frenemy that is Amazon and how physical environments are becoming more digital. We also cover the wave of incoming chatbots, design trends and consumer behavior changes smart marketers are watching and adapting to. This past decade has brought incredible changes in marketing, and we have been honored to be part of how you stay on top of it all.

Happy marketing!

You can also download a digital copy of the 2019 Trends book at
thundertech.com/trends2019

contents

DESIGNING WITH PURPOSE

HOW BRANDS ARE AVOIDING FADS TO CREATE SOLID DESIGN TO WITHSTAND THE TEST OF TIME

The design of brand logos used to be a "black box" process where customers didn't get to see changes or comment on them until they were released back into the wild. But today, the preponderance of simple desktop editing tools, social media and an increased interest in how companies represent themselves has made any visual changes a company makes to their brand the subject of intense public debate. The black box has been busted wide open.

Often when it comes to changes to a brand, companies are damned if they do and damned if they don't. Companies who try to gradually evolve their brand over time are criticized for wasting stockholders money on changes that aren't worth the effort. Take Shell Oil, a brand that hasn't significantly changed in more than 60 years.

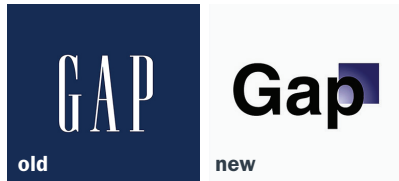| 1955	1961	1971	1995	Today

On the other end are brands who try something radically new, only to be derided for changing a beloved brand too much. GAP attempted a significant brand relaunch in 2011, only to return to the previous mark when the public outcry became deafening.

old   new

What's a forward-looking brand to do? Smart brands are embracing a strategic iterative approach to keep themselves looking fresh without alienating long-time devotees.

The best strategy is to make sure to lean on sound design principles that have longevity while avoiding the popular design craze of the moment.

Design Trends vs. Design Fads

When approaching a new design, it's important to weigh if it's a strong design approach that will support your brand over time or just a virtual flash in the pan.

Design trends are built upon a platform of solid design thinking and tend to be evolutionary in nature. Trends are the prevailing course of design and may very well become the "new normal." Design fads, on the other hand, are volatile and often become tired and outdated in short order.

But how to tell the difference? A simple way to determine if something is a fad or a trend is to consider three criteria:

Does it add substance? Is it strictly decorative? Is it there for a reason? If the design element in question adds usability, engagement and/or expresses the brand in a new way, it is more likely to become an accepted part of the long-term brand expression.

Does it work with only a limited population? If the design element only resonates with, for example, West Coast homeowners and no one else, you've discovered an extremely specific tactic, not a trend worth following.

Is it repeatable? Stunts, unexpected convergences of events and "catch lightning in a bottle" moments may be extremely impactful, but if they only work for a limited time and/or cannot be applied widely, they are unlikely to catch on and remain useful.

The final consideration should be the cost of implementation. If you want to change your website's header color to match the Pantone Color of the Year (a shade of purple called "ultra violet" for 2018) that's easy enough; but if you want to repaint every truck in your fleet purple, that's a significantly greater level of commitment.

Brands need not shy away from designs that are trendy or popular, but they do need to recognize them for what they are. If you put too much of your marketing dollars into a fad, you may end up putting a lot of time, effort and money into fidget spinners or flash mob concepts that quickly lose their appeal and stop driving the results you need.

Iterative Design

There are some brands—such as those who deal with fashion, apparel or other seasonal elements—who benefit greatly from regular significant changes to their look and feel. For the rest, there's iterative design.

Middle-market and enterprise brands who want to keep themselves fresh without starting from scratch every time should adopt an iterative approach: regular, small, strategic upgrades. This ensures the design doesn't become stale (especially online) but also doesn't require the time and effort a full-blown brand redesign requires.

This iterative design process allows a company to strategically evolve the look and feel of its brand over a set timeframe without diverting an impractical amount of internal resources to the effort.

By approaching your brand with an iterative approach, you too can drive your visual aesthetic forward and keep your brand simultaneously fresh and familiar to your audience. ::

LISTEN TO OUR DESIGN PODCAST
THUNDERTECH.COM/PODCAST/DESIGN

DESIGN TRENDS TO WATCH

The following design trends are gaining popularity and will soon be seen on everything from websites to beer labels.

1. Gradients
A "gradient" is just a fancy designer term for a gradual transition from one color to another. It can be subtle or bold and often provides a vibrant background for text and graphics or an overlay for photography.

2. Duotones
A duotone is simply an image in which the original range of colors have been reduced to two (duo) colors (tones). The result can be subdued or striking, depending on the colors chosen.

3. Typography
The use of text and typefaces in graphic design is nothing new, but today's designers are finding original and artistic methods of carrying the design using only text or leveraging text extensively.

4. Custom illustration
The trend we first wrote about back in our 2015 Trends book (Vol. 6) is hot again as designers look for ways to set brands apart from the competition with hand-drawn typography and unique illustration.

5. Animated GIFs
Simple looping animations, sometimes called "cinemagraphs," are popular as they add a dynamic layer of movement and interest in your digital designs without significantly adding to file size.

CLICK IF YOU'RE NOT A ROBOT
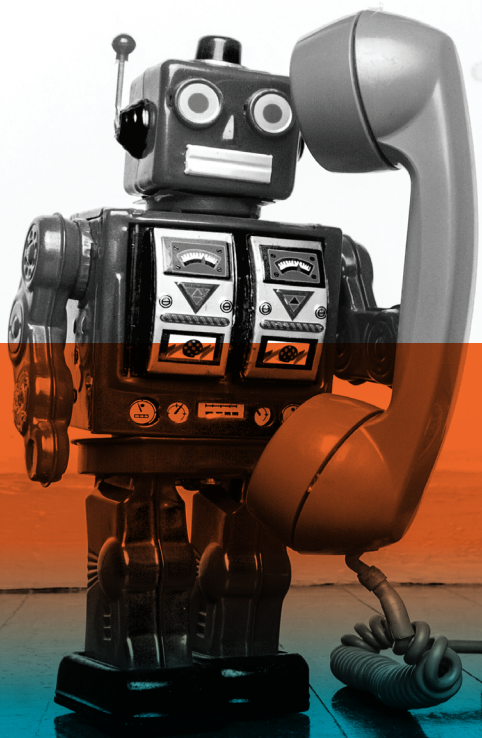
Chatbots and other AI interfaces are gaining popularity. Is your brand ready to talk?

How easily does conversation come for you? Are you one of those personable, pleasant and quick-witted individuals that can hold an enjoyable conversation with anyone? Or do you get high anxiety at even the mere hint of attending a networking event?

For many professionals, customer service interactions and sales conversations do not come easily either. In fact, these interactions are so full of slippery obstacles these days that your company could face some serious social media backlash if there is a wrongly worded response or gaffe anywhere along the way.

Now, think about asking a group of developers to translate wit, empathy and branding into code. And, with those developer hours spent, demand phenomenal business returns in the form of propelled transactions, satisfied customers and newly acquired accounts. One would think that is a charge only true sci-fi artificial intelligence could satisfy.

That is pretty much where most of the big names in retail, finance, insurance, health care and other industries are today with chatbots and virtual assistants, and it well describes the challenge they have issued to their CIOs and CMOs.

Like most emerging tech trends, the big questions for those in the middle-market are, "Should my company get involved?" and, "What are risks and rewards of doing so?"

What Are Chatbots?

When we think chatbot, we might conjure visions of simple, small voice assistants located neatly on our furniture or countertops. Others might envision the form or pop-up on a website we interact with and type in our frustrations or requests to a company hoping for a speedy resolution—or, minimally, one that is highly documented.

Chatbots are computer programs, or AI applications, that offer conversations either through voice-enabled devices or text methods, like a live chat, messenger or SMS application.

To execute a chatbot, you will likely need to incorporate natural language processing, AI and heavy cloud and API development.

Who Is Doing It?

If there is a cutting-edge technology or trend today, it is almost a certainty Amazon is already well-versed or deeply invested in it. While the Amazon Echo was introduced in 2014, conversational AI has been actively researched for close to 50 years with the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. Since then, citing an article from The Information, Amazon has sold about 50 million Alexa devices.

Almost everyone nowadays is familiar with Alexa thanks to the funny marketing commercials or use in our own lives. The entertainment value and sheer range of Alexa is fascinating. It appears that, yet again, Amazon is dominating. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has successfully taken an idea and given it life—almost literally.

But in spite of the incredible awareness, adoption and execution, only about 2% of the people with devices that use Amazon's Alexa intelligent assistant—mostly Amazon's own Echo line of speakers—have made a purchase with their voices so far in 2018.

Even with those numbers, many are projecting annual voice shopping sales to reach $40 billion in just a few years.

To get into the Alexa shopping game and potentially gain some of that $40 billion share, you need to get developers on board. Amazon sources say developers outside of the company have created more than 45,000 Alexa "skills," or customized voice functions. Currently, food ordering using Alexa is supported by Domino's Pizza, GrubHub, Pizza Hut, Seamless and Wingstop. Back in early 2017, Starbucks released a private BETA for ordering via Alexa.

What is the real benefit of a chatbot or voice assistant, and how can your company leverage it? While the numbers today for shopping and ordering through voice assistants might not be jaw-dropping, they will certainly increase.

Most leaders in today's businesses see varied value in chatbots and voice assistants. They also see some heavy risks and pitfalls if not executed and implemented properly.

Do you ever deflect or plead ignorance on certain topics you find unnerving or divisive? Well, that is normal and, in reality, proper etiquette, not just for us humans but also for AI-powered chatbots that could go off the rails quickly if not given proper rules and templates to work from.

Most people today are familiar with Flo from Progressive. Her witty skits and sketches on TV and in digital form are highly entertaining. Progressive Chief Marketing Officer Jeff Charney and his team of software developers and strategists have taken that "uncomfortable" conversation risk into account as they translate Flo into a chatbot on Facebook Messenger. For example, due to some experience, Flo will deflect or plead ignorance to any conversation involving President Donald Trump or former Secretary Hillary Clinton.

Even with all of the potential pitfalls and risks in investing in the build of a robot and releasing it to the world, chatbots could provide incredible scale to automating low-value activities that occur in high-volume scenarios.

Examples of these include:

- Getting product/service quotes or prices
- Facebook Messenger
- Web chat
- Personal assistants
- Scheduling appointments
- Providing shipping estimates

"Many are projecting annual voice shopping sales to reach **$40 BILLION** in just a few years."

- Finding quick, FAQ-style answers
- Relaying simple account information
- Submitting and issuing support tickets

Whether or not you feel chatbots are in your company's future, you should be familiar with the concept. More likely than not, you probably have already chatted with a bot this week. ::

LISTEN TO OUR CHATBOTS PODCAST
THUNDERTECH.COM/PODCAST/CHATBOTS

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BRANDS NEED TO BE CAUTIOUS WHILE NAVIGATING AMAZON'S SWIFT RETAIL CURRENT

I t wasn't all so long ago when the average consumer was weary of entering a credit card number into an online store, unsure of how the virtual shopping process would work. *Where will my information go? Will I ever receive my products? What happens if I'm not happy with my purchase?*

Today, we live in the world of one-click checkout and two-day shipping. According to Fortune and the Department of Commerce data, e-commerce generated 13% of total retail sales in 2017, up from 7.9% in 2012 and 3.2% in 2007. Technology is the most rapidly changing medium in our lives, to the point where we as consumers and professional marketers don't get a fair amount of time to assess, comprehend and challenge the new elements thrown at us as a part of modern society.

As the space for creative, fresh ideas to enter the market continues to shrink among the noise, and the space to communicate to consumers in that market becomes even more limited and tricky, the perfect storm has been created: a place where businesses launch, learn to operate in a lean and scrappy manner, and then grow quickly. The same place where consumers have learned to navigate their way through a maze of content, reviews and ads in order to make decisions. This is where Amazon lives and thrives today. In the center of the storm where brands either compete or join and consumers login daily because it's easier than shopping elsewhere. But what comes next in this 24/7 e-commerce world is what we should all be keeping an eye on because navigating the Amazon ecosystem as marketers and consumers will change, and change very soon.

The Amazon Ecosystem

What is this evolving e-commerce ecosystem, and what does it mean for middle-market consumers and marketers? The greatest example, and possibly the reason for the growth of e-commerce overall, is Amazon. The brand has made strategic investments (or sometimes flat-out risky or aggressive investments) in taking on every corner of consumerism. Recently, the company stopped using Google as an advertising medium. Why? It created its own. And we already know, what Amazon can't create on its own, it buys...cough, Whole Foods, cough. Amazon's marketing started out a bit clunky, but what it learned there, and obviously borrowed from others in the ad game, has grown into a suite of marketing options provided to

> **Recently, Amazon stopped using Google as an advertising medium.**
> **Why?** It created its own.

its vendors, further instilling the concept of one-stop business management for marketers like you who wear many hats.

Next year, Amazon is predicted to make nearly $6.6 billion from advertising alone. The range of ad options include the traditional self-serve paid search ads (á la, Google Ads), but soon, marketers can expect more off-site options to the level of remarketing and programmatic advertising and even TV and digital options among Amazon-owned entities, such as Prime Videos or Fire TV. To put that into perspective further,

by 2021, EMarketer Inc. estimates advertising on websites and mobile will account for half of all ad spending in the U.S. This will equate to a greater share than television, radio, newspapers and billboards combined. So how can brands compete in this space?

With these features, brands will find new options emerging to help reach consumers in spaces such as their own cars (Alexa is already part of some new vehicle packages) using voice search technology. But also, familiar ways of targeting known customers by leveraging shared data and online engagement via pixel tracking will become more prevalent. (We don't have space to get into GDPR or Cambridge Analytica...we tried, the editor cut it. Insert your own history-repeats-itself warning here.) What's different, and some would argue better, with Amazon compared to Google and Facebook is the fact that people naturally shop on the platform. With that mindset and the subsequent consumer actions, the platform is expected to excel at collecting behavioral analytics and position itself to be the best e-commerce ad space for marketers to invest in. If for nothing else, marketers who desperately need to track ROI will use these services because closed-loop reporting won't be a thing to fuss over...the whole experience is happening in one place. Sell. Track. Done.

Navigating The Amazon

Predicting what the next few years of Amazon marketing will look like is similar to navigating the real Amazon River—depending on the rainy season, we aren't sure how wide and tumultuous the crossing may be for middle-market brands. This could go two ways:

1. E-commerce brands and marketers will be lured into the appeal of the Amazon suite and double down on all its features and advertising power. These brands will make money, compete in the shrinking ad space successfully and generally be okay on this rented land. It's a good place to learn and do business, but it is rented space with rented consumers and data from a singular space. True growth in the long-term will be hard to control in someone else's system.

2. Brands will learn to leverage Amazon's ad and business options as rental space, just like Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook, to reach billions of buyers. The savvy marketer will use this space as a go-to market launch platform for two to three years or another retail space to complement a current business structure, but not as the only retail space. Then he or she will use a comprehensive marketing plan to fold the Amazon tools and marketing lessons learned into his or

Amazon is predicted to make over

$6.6 BILLION

next year from advertising alone.

her overall business mix. This can include tactics from paid search to customer relations to consumer data storage and on-site SEO, making Amazon a part of a larger marketing workflow. This process will give marketers control of the brand and the power to pivot as appropriate.

Why aren't we singing the praises of Amazon? Don't get us wrong, we like to move fast and can't get enough of watching how technology and business are driving change in consumers' lives, but we aren't sure yet if this growth is being managed well. If big, traditionally brick-and-mortar brands are entering the space to stay digitally competitive, and driving cost-per-click averages up and filling ad space, will this platform be a successful solution for middle-market brands by the next Prime Day let alone long-term?

Some accounts portray Amazon as the champion for the small guy as it offers so many tools (the same ones the big guys value) in order to build and scale a brand. And others say it is the place where innovative companies go to be hunted, gobbled up and then disappear—or where those innovations are copied and rolled into the Amazon-owned family of products and services. As with every new marketing option, strategic and well-informed decision making, with a side of skepticism and a dash of conspiracy-theorist-restraint will be the true key to success with Amazon's appeal for middle-market brands. ::

LISTEN TO OUR AMAZON PODCAST
THUNDERTECH.COM/PODCAST/AMAZON

CHOOSING YOUR DESTINATION

▶ DOUBLE DOWN ON ALL OF AMAZON'S FEATURES

E-commerce brands will be lured into the appeal of the Amazon Suite.

Rent land, make money, compete in shrinking ad space.

Hard to control true growth long-term in someone else's system.

▶ LEVERAGE AMAZON AS RENTAL SPACE

Leverage the rental space to reach billions of buyers.

Use this space as a go-to market launch program to complement another business structure.

Fold these tools into your marketing plan, giving your brand more control and power to pivot.

THE EVOLVING AUDIENCE

FOUR CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIORS THAT MIGHT JUST CHANGE YOUR BRAND

For the past 10 years, thunder::tech's annual Trends report focused primarily on "what" is changing in marketing; it's time we cover some of the "why" as well. We have included the wide view on the digitization of society and how that's impacting brands, but, to really understand the state of the American consumer, we need to look at the whole picture.

BEHAVIOR 1

OMNICHANNEL IS REAL

Your consumer doesn't care enough anymore to search for your product. They want it wherever they prefer to go already: physical retail, Amazon, eBay, Facebook, catalog, phone or elsewhere. Here's the rub: Do not enter any of these channels half-heartedly. Consumers are too smart and impatient to deal with your lack of full investment and will leave a digital trail of complaints and poor ratings that will impact your overall brand.

According to PWC, over the past six years, mobile commerce more than doubled, from 7% to 17%—and will likely soon surpass PC-based buying. In the grocery category specifically, according to the Food Marketing Institute, 28% of shoppers buy online at least occasionally and that number spikes to 43% for millenials. These trends do not lead us to believe all buying will eventually be online, but it will certainly be aided by digital methods. Neustar's recent report published in AdAge showed 67% of millennials buy in store after doing online research first, which can include price comparisons, product reviews, store locations and availability searches.

Takeaway: Commerce is not linear and will only continue to become more fragmented as channels and information proliferate. Move fast to test and learn additional online channels (see Amazon article, Page 10) and care for your digital information (reviews, ratings and such) that will help drive customers to you online or offline.

BEHAVIOR 2

INFLUENCE
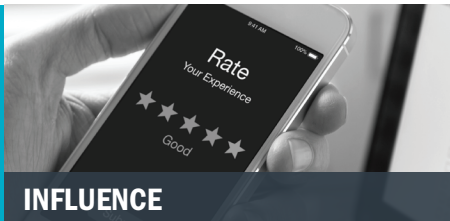
It's an old habit now amplified because of digital and has major ramifications for how companies communicate sales messages: Consumers want to know what their friends think.

Of consumers that were surveyed regarding where they went for inspiration for purchases, a plurality (37%) chose social media, with individual retailer websites at 34%. In the food category, according to a report from Influencer Central, an incredbile amount (94%) of consumers buy new food ingredients after being influenced by social media recipes or photos. Recipes shared on social media are now the number one influencer for grocery shopping. Hungry? Just open up a social app!

Consumers are easing back into the "lean back" days of television with visually driven social networks commanding our attention. According to a study from Linqia, 92% of marketers

> **What we see online is going to keep changing with more regulation on data.** Yet, expectations for personalization will increase with the data consumers give you.

chose Instagram as the most important social platform for influencer marketing. Need more evidence about the power of social and, in particular, how Instagram is having it's moment right now? More than 40% of millennials aged 18 to 33 consider "Instagrammability" when selecting their next travel destination, according to a recent survey by Schofields.

Takeaway: Move at the speed of culture to adapt to and embrace online reviews, ratings, influencers and general online word-of-mouth power over your brand. Also, give more attention to how your brand represents itself visually and how good pieces will look when shared. You better make sure the lighting is spot-on with your Instagram account!

BEHAVIOR 3

PRIVACY GROWS BUT PERSONALIZATION IS A MUST

The drumbeat intensified in 2018 with respect to data privacy and ownership after high-profile breaches became standard news and the European Union's GDPR law went into effect (see Page 18 for more on this). On the world's largest social network, the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica scandal created consumer distrust that devolved into only 41% of Facebook users trusting the social network.

In spite of this ruckus on the privacy side of data, consumers still want an increasing amount of personalization. Think about how standard it is to know everything about the process with something you're having shipped or looking at a menu and knowing more than you ever did before about the farm that supplied the produce or meat on your plate. Customers want to see their history with you and when possible get credit for their loyalty.

Takeaway: Scrutiny around privacy and data ownership will only grow (see California's own recently passed version of GDPR); so, know what you are doing with customer data and where you are storing it.

At the same time, with what personalized data are you enabling your customers? If you can provide easier answers to their questions, especially through secure methods, you meet their expectations about the transparency and immediate, personalized answers they crave.

4

DIGITAL NATIVES AREN'T ROBOTS

In a recent AdAge report on Generation Z (those born after 1997), 80% of this population receives most of its information from social media followed by 55% from mobile apps. However, this supposedly "all digital" generation still prefers to read books the old-fashioned way: in print. A whopping 77% of this generation prefers to consume their books via paper rather than e-readers.

When it comes to talking to your brand, they are decidedly old school. Gen Z's top two methods for customer support are first to email your brand (40%) then to actually speak to someone face-to-face in store (21%). However, they are used to on-demand answers as digital natives and will not stay on hold on the phone for more than 45 seconds.

Takeaway: Technology is an enhancer to life for many of us, especially younger generations that never knew a world without it, but that doesn't mean you have to go 100% digital to reach people. However, the habits learned online (speed, immediacy, personalization) are translating to offline expectations.

These four broad consumer behavior changes have been evolving for some time and all overlap one another. Omnichannel is here to stay, with the path to any purchase being influenced by what we trust online. What we see online is going to keep changing with more regulation on data, yet expectations for personalization will increase with the data consumers do give you. And with all that being said, consumers still want human, traditional interactions but with digitally influenced offline expectations. Brands - stay nimble, because your customer certainly is. ::

LISTEN TO OUR CONSUMER BEHAVIOR PODCAST
THUNDERTECH.COM/PODCAST/CONSUMERBEHAVIOR

GETTING PERSONAL WITH DATA

PROTECTING PRIVACY, SECURITY AND YOUR SOVEREIGN DATA IN THE GDPR ERA

The party is over. Gone are the days when we, as marketers, could beg, borrow and snag data unbeknownst to our customers and use it to better target them with slick creative, automations and simply irresistible promotions.

Man, it was fun. We could literally spin up a database and collect information on customers for any campaign we wanted to conjure up.

Did we need IT or infrastructure to hold our hand or police what we were doing? Hell no! Why would we? We had deadlines and results to deliver and, frankly, IT had a lead time of 4-5 weeks that we frankly couldn't wait on.

We created landing pages that were hosted on an agency-provided server, powered by Wordpress. We used a plugin to monitor and capture the information submitted. We fired off some cool, activity-triggered nurture email campaigns aligned with our retargeted ads, and we got some great leads. When we combined those tactics with the ability to export and upload those leads into a big data system that pulled additional layered information on each one, we were rocking and rolling.

Man, we are going to miss those days. But should we?

These past few years, we've seen a number of events that have continued to bring awareness and attention to data capturing policies and the practices of modern businesses that may participate in them, including Cambridge Analytica and Facebook and Zuck getting put in the hot seat with Congress. In fact, even the gigantic Equifax, an agency whose sole purpose is to collect, protect and report on sensitive personal consumer information, was hacked.

Thanks to this whirlwind of hackers, invasion of privacy and intense targeting by reckless marketers, you get both public and private attempts at mitigating the impact and risk. The symbiotic relationship between the businesses that collect and store your information through transactions and the hackers that then target those same databases cannot be ignored.

Europe's broad-sweeping, extraterritorial General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a paradigm-shifting, very public attempt at stemming the tide of invasion. This legislation passed by the European Union established unprecedented regulations for businesses and rights for European consumers regarding personal data, including the right to be forgotten and right to granular opt-out of marketing and tracking tactics (e.g. cookies, retargeting). Further, the definition of what is considered

personal data was greatly expanded to include lots of previously unprotected tracking data (e.g. IP addresses, geolocation data, engagement data). All of these changes were made fully enforceable in 2018.

While innovative on its own, GDPR will probably be more recognized in the future not for the policies written within its own text but more so for what it inspires and influences from here forward.

The State of California, for example, quickly passed its own legislation this past year on the heels of GDPR. Set to come into effect at the start of 2020, the California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018 will give consumers within its protection (defined as natural persons who are California residents) new basic rights in relation to their personal information:

- Right to know what personal data is stored on them
- Right to access personal information
- Right to know if personal information is sold or disclosed
- Right to opt out of having personal information sold
- Right to remove and delete information
- Right to receive equal service and pricing should they exercise the above rights with a business
- Opt-in rights for minors

Similar to GDPR, California's new legislation also expands the definition of personal information to include data points surrounding products and services

purchased, geolocation data, biometric data, browsing history, search history, engagement data and even your analysis of all of those things. And, similar to GDPR, California plans to enforce these new measures through the use of hefty fines.

But state governments aren't the only ones making efforts. An example of a different, private attempt to allow consumers to manage their data more directly—outside of typical Lifelock-style security services—is Killi. Directly from the Killi website, "Killi acts as a personal data locker that is controlled by the user and secured by blockchain. Killi allows you to take back control of your personal data from those who are selling it today without your consent."

In essence, the intention here is to leverage blockchain, and, of course, some entrepreneurial contracts with brands, corporations and businesses, to allow the individual to manage

> "While innovative on its own, GDPR will probably be more recognized in the future not for the policies written within its own text **but more so for what it inspires and influences from here forward.**

State governments aren't the only ones making efforts in data protection. Consumers are making efforts in taking back control of their personal data from those who are selling it today without consent.

his or her personal information, and get some coin for it. It will certainly have a shot at bringing more control and centralization to the landscape for consumers and perhaps even brands, but will it really raise the level of protection?

Going forward, with the rise of security awareness, a heightened sense of vulnerability, blockchain technology, government legislation, continued entrepreneurship and the ever-expanding knowledge of the effects data exploitation can have, we are going to see a lot of action in the coming years and brands need to keep up.

Whether or not you have already established governance around marketing data going forward, you may want to start exploring the new solutions, like Killi, and how it may provide the better path to targeting your customers.

At thunder::tech, we are counseling our middle-market and enterprise clients to undergo audits of all of their policies and

practices regarding data collection, integrity and protection. It is vital to know where your customers' data is and how it is stored, secured, rectified and, if requested, deleted completely. Analyze why you are gathering the data you're gathering. You may find you have more than you need, which simply opens up your organization to additional and unnecessary risk. These are vital inventories to take in order to best comply with the letter of the law.

In a not-so-distant future, our lead generation, data capturing and marketing techniques of today will be completely turned upside down and evolved into something entirely different. It is our duty as marketing professionals, and consumers ourselves, to stay informed and compliant with new policies that are designed to keep us all safe. **::**

LISTEN TO OUR GDPR + PRIVACY PODCAST
THUNDERTECH.COM/PODCAST/PRIVACY

EXPLORING YOUR PERSONAL SPACE

HOW TO START INTEGRATING YOUR DIGITAL BRAND INTO PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Every day, the science fiction we watched and read during the 20th Century is becoming more of a reality. We walk around with computers in our pockets, have cars almost smart enough to drive themselves, shout questions into the air and receive answers from our personal assistants and touch walls that interact and share data with us.

The category first thought of as being most impacted by this new reality is retail. With the "Amazonification" of the American consumer, it is not what Amazon has done to traditional retail that is important to dwell on. Rather, for those retail brands still standing (and the rest of us, too), it is the changes in consumer behavior that are forcing retail to evolve quicker than ever before that are worth studying. In fact, our readers have ranked the topic of taking digital into the offline world as their greatest area of interest.

The trend of integrating digital into physical environments is gaining momentum because it is becoming more expected by consumers and cost-effectively testable by brands. Further, competition from all sides is forcing it. Whether it's the retail, destination, manufacturing or service category, we all want brands to deliver faster, more personalized experiences to us.

Let us be clear that having Wi-Fi available, contactless payment readers, ship-to-store options and sales associates armed with mobile devices are becoming table stakes to remain competitive. Your customers are expecting more regardless of your industry.

Types Of Environments

Think about all environments that can become more robust, entertaining and effective when digital is used within their physical realms. The immediate areas where we have seen incredibly positive impact are:

- Sales centers
- Any form of retail
- Welcome areas
- Event spaces
- Innovation centers
- B2B and B2C points of sale
- Education and training engagements

> "The trend of integrating digital into physical environments is gaining momentum because it is becoming more expected by consumers and cost-effectively testable by brands.

Most of these places are not futuristic novelties. They are everyday points where brands interact with their customers or team members in real life, and brands are using digital integrations to enable richer interactions, create process efficiencies and differentiate themselves from the competition.

These areas can take advantage of various applications such as:

Touch Screens

Real-Time Information

Wayfinding Applications

Augmented & Virtual Reality

Online Ordering in Offline Environments

Custom Alexa Skill Development

"Internet of Things" (IoT) Integrations

Content on Demand

Self-Service Kiosks

Customer Expectations

Expectations almost always start first with the B2C segment and then transfer to everyone else. The ease and ubiquitous nature of so many things in consumers lives (e.g. Google, YouTube, Amazon) have given birth to these consumer expectations in all facets of society.

Once we have been introduced to this as consumers, we tend to expect this with all things we consume and experience. This includes raising our expectations within our professional lives.

Customer expectations are increasingly demanding your brand be convenient, personalized and immediate. Digital integration into physical environments is assisting with meeting these consumer desires.

Factors In Brands' Favor

Many brands we work with that are contemplating moving into or improving on initiatives like this do not always realize how much work they have already done that will help them. Brands have their content in much better shape today than in the past. Their e-commerce competency is rising, and they recognize the importance of investing in user experience design. Technical and marketing stacks are integrated for many more purposes, which allows for this integration to be mapped to existing systems more easily.

The concept of a headless content management system (CMS) is assisting where content is centrally organized and managed but is delivered to a multitude of applications. For example, a calendar on a website can also be pushed to a mobile app, digital signage and a voice assistant with the proper setup.

Next Steps

Finally, consumers are not expecting full immersion yet. Brands can start with the basics, such as displaying pertinent information from a central source, and then learn and move into more engaging tools that allow one-to-one interaction before leaping into fully immersive environments where lighting, temperature, information and tools are all baked together.

As with any trend, the important point is to get started so you learn quickly and keep the attention of increasingly fickle customers. ::

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THUNDERTECH.COM/PODCAST/DIGITALINTEGRATION

"Customer expectations are increasingly demanding your brand be convenient, personalized and immediate. **Digital integration into physical environments is assisting with meeting these consumer desires.**"

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thanks

Thanks for taking the time to read our 2019 Trends book! I hope you found the topics applicable to your marketing efforts and that you will be able to deploy some of these for your brand in the coming year.

Ten years of Trends publishing has taught us that in order to be the most useful to you, we have to focus on what is realistic. None of the marketing trends we publish are theories and many are not all that new... However, they all have enough critical mass to now matter to you.

I do want to end this by telling you that you have impressed me over the past decade. A marketer's job is ever-changing, more demanding and more complex year by year. Kudos to all of you that keep charging ahead; you are the inspiration for us to keep publishing Trends!!

HAPPY MARKETING IN 2019!

::Jason Therrien
President & CEO

jason.therrien@thundertech.com
@JasonTherrien

You can also download a digital copy of the 2019 Trends book at
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