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FOREWORD

If there’s one thing marketers all over the world are struggling to keep up with it’s the everchanging social media.

It affects all brands whether you’re a global giant or an upcoming startup, either in B2C or B2B markets. Also the impact within companies is widening: it’s not only about marketing or communications, but also other aspects of business, ranging from recruitment to product development and from service design to company culture.

The pace of development is astonishing. People working in the field need to keep up with the changes in established channels on a daily basis and keep an eye out for new ones on a weekly basis. Not to mention the constant unlearning of old truths regarding e.g. algorithms. And since it affects almost all areas of business, there aren’t many professionals who don’t need to know at least the basics of where social media is and where it’s headed.

Fortunately we have a wide range of trend reports released at the turn of each year to help us all with the challenge. Yet, because of the rapid-fire developments, going through trend reports once a year only gets us half way. Which is why we wanted to give you a round-up at Q2. From the creative community, to the creative community.

This report is compiled in conjunction with the first Cannes Lions Social Media Creative Academy, which will take place in Cannes during the Lions festival of 2016. Hope to see you there!

1st June 2016, New York, London, Helsinki
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We asked ten experts around the world how they see social media is developing from the point-of-view of the marketer. This summary gives a glance to the near future, but do read on for each of their answers in full below.

Five major trends in social media marketing

1. Strategic integration of social

Gone are the days when social media was the task of one person in the company. Social is at its best when it’s supported by a culture of openness, not separated by silos and integrated into the strategy.

“I think the most popular trend is that social media is becoming larger than just social media. It’s not about rapid fire content and bite-size entertainment, but rather tied into core marketing strategy.” Juuso Myllyrinne, VP, Digital, TBWA

“Social transcends both marketing and communications and also permeates the employee base of a company as well as customer service. Internal turf wars hold back innovation and integration and limits the effectiveness of programs, campaigns and initiatives.” David Armano, Global Strategy Director, Edelman

 “[My wish is] that we move from a world where people no longer look for a social strategy, but for social deeply embedded within their strategy.” Thomas Crampton, Global Managing Director, Social@Ogilvy, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide

2. Omnichannel customer-centricity

Be it paid, owned or earned, social media requires thinking from the customer point-of-view. Being relevant and delivering a great experience is becoming ever more important with the growing number of channels and the rise of “walled-garden” platforms: users choose if, when and where they want to interact with your brand.
“Today, it’s possible to know a lot more about the singular likes and dislikes of a customer but finding them en masse is almost impossible. It’s also now the individual customer who can decide where, when and how they will interact with the brand. This means that the challenge to brands is how to create a cohesive, consistent and positive experience for their consumers.” Kerry Gaffney, Director Community & Communication, MOFILM

“Make awesome content that people can’t ignore. That’s not really a trend I guess, but it’s all you should care about.” Martin Mohr, Group Creative Director, Hjaltelin Stahl

“In order to have people talk about you and your ideas, you must resist the urge to hype your products and services. Instead, create something interesting that will be talked about online.” David Meerman Scott, Marketing strategist and bestselling author of ten books, Freshspot Marketing LLC

“The biggest challenge is moving from a ‘churning out content’ approach to carefully ensuring that you get the right content in front of the right audience at the right time. This means using data to segment your audience and really ensure your creative execution is getting in front of the right person.” Danny Whatmough, Head of Social, Weber Shandwick

“It’s easy to find out what people like. And it’s easy to decide what you want to say, but finding the overlap is the creative part.” Juuso Myllyrinne VP, Digital, TBWA

3. Shift from text to visual
Social media is leading the way into a world in which our communication is dominated by images and videos, the latter being in constant change in itself, too, for example with the introduction of 360 and VR.

“Video and live streaming create an experience for the user and consumer. Marketing now is about these experiences.” Sandy Carter, General Manager, Startups and Ecosystems, IBM

“Millennials and Gen Y, combined with the pervasive nature of mobile and increasing data speeds and bandwidth are migrating toward video as the primary way they want to both consume and create content.” David Armano, Global Strategy Director, Edelman

“Video is a large part of visual communication but so increasingly are photos, gifs, filters and emojis. There are now over 1,600 standard emojis that have been absorbed into popular culture, vastly expanding language and allowing even faster and richer communication.” Kerry Gaffney, Director Community & Communication, MOFILM

4. Real-time growing in importance
With the wide adoption of Facebook Live, Snapchat and Periscope, brands need to adjust their marketing processes to match the requirements of both the plan-and-launch and the always-on models.

“Real-time platforms are the biggest trend in online marketing for 2016. The ability to tell a more compelling, transparent and “in the moment story” gets attention.” Deirdre Breakenridge, CEO, Pure Performance Communications

“Marketers must develop a real-time mindset. A real-time mindset recognizes the importance of speed. It is an attitude to business (and to life) that emphasizes moving quickly when the time is right.” David Meerman Scott, Marketing strategist and bestselling author of ten books, Freshspot Marketing LLC

“[The biggest challenge is] being fast enough. I’ve seen so many great possibilities die
because the train left the station yesterday or 2 hours ago.” Martin Mohr, Group Creative Director, Hjaltelin Stahl

“Many brands are not capturing the right data and analyzing effectively for their reporting to C-level executives. In this case, expectations don’t always match program results.” Deirdre Breakenridge, CEO, Pure Performance Communications

“There are so many [social] metrics out there and unlike in sales, there is no standard. While technology and tools attempt to help, many still fail at being able to get down to the granular level that is needed to be effective.” Sandy Carter, General Manager, Startups and Ecosystems, IBM

5. Development of business-based KPIs

Even though social media ROI is still a big question in most companies, the metrics being used have evolved in the right direction over the years. Frontrunners have set up KPIs that are based on business objectives, not the goals of channel owners.

Top channels for 2016

**Snapchat.** Playing by their own rules and loved by their users. If you want to see where social media is headed, Snapchat might be the best place to start.

**Facebook.** Dominating the scene on all fields. Keep an eye out especially for Messenger, Live and Instant Articles.

**Instagram.** Leading the way into visual storytelling. Nowadays becoming more and more interesting for brands, too.

Keep in mind that channel choices always depend on the target groups, context and content. No one-size-fits-all approaches to this.

Buzzwords to drop in 2016

**Social media marketing.** It’s so ubiquitous and overarching at this point that maybe we could finally stop talking about it as a separate thing.

**Engagement.** Everyone’s going on about it, but do we know what they’re saying? When it comes to metrics, stick to terms such as impressions and awareness.

**Viral.** Social media is as much owned and paid as it is earned. All this talk about viral skews our thinking, and leads to bad decisions.

**Brand Newsroom.** An effort with good real-time intentions, but rather sad results usually.
EXPERT INTERVIEWS
What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?
The shift from text to video or visual literacy as I call it. Millennials and Gen Y, combined with the pervasive nature of mobile and increasing data speeds and bandwidth are migrating toward video as the primary way they want to both consume and create content. Emerging formats such as 360 video and live streaming as well as the emergence of video enabled cultural influencers are also driving factors that are adding fuel to this trend.

Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?
Snapchat and Instagram for different reasons. Snapchat is gaining popularity not only with teens but the combination of being able to create stories, use targeted filters and the increasing popularity with cultural influencers makes it one to watch. Instagram with it’s Facebook like algorithm make it an even more significant paid opportunity for brands who want to connect to audiences there. The 60 second video format Instagram offers is also a compelling factor and aligns with the move toward video and away from text.

What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?
Integration from both a strategy, creative and measurement perspective. Brands that have under invested in social are probably still trying to discern the value and what they should be doing while brands who have moved quickly in the space are grappling with how to integrate all of their efforts balancing integration with bigger campaigns with an always on model. Integrating and updating KPIs is also a challenge as is coordinating paid efforts as new tools emerge such as sponsored editorial and native advertising.

Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?
“Social marketing”. It’s all just marketing now.

Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?
Better integration between the marketing and communications sides of the house. Social transcends both and also permeates the employee base of a company as well as customer service. Internal turf wars hold back innovation and integration and limits the effectiveness of programs, campaigns and initiatives.
What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?

Real-time platforms are the biggest trend in online marketing for 2016. Brands are using platforms such as Snapchat to launch new products, introduce users to new promotions, give customers a sneak peek, and leverage influencers. Of course, the use of real-time video will be top of mind. The ability to tell a more compelling, transparent and “in the moment story” gets attention.

Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?

Keep your eyes on FB Live Video and FB Instant Articles and Snapchat. These platforms are finding new and interesting ways to engage users as well as monetize their platforms with more advertising opportunities. Sponsoring Snapchat filters is also very interesting. Of course, don’t count out Twitter just yet. More Millennials are turning to Twitter for social causes and their “news.”

What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?

A big challenge for brands will be feeling more comfortable with real-time engagement, which is not scripted, requires strategy and a true understanding of your audience. Brands will also continue to be challenged with the ROI question. Many are not capturing the right data and analyzing effectively for their reporting to C-level executives. In this case, expectations don’t always match program results.

Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?

The word “engagement” just might have to go away. It means too many things to too many people. We need to nail down exactly what we’re saying when it comes to meaningful participation through social media and define a standard. We should also stop talking about hits and impressions and be more focused on performance analytics. Lastly, the “number of followers” as a phenomenon is becoming less important. It’s never been about the numbers. Businesses should focus on quality over quantity. Buying followers should not be an option.

Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?

A meeting of the minds … business executive acumen meets Millennial social savvy. If we can close the gap on the business objectives for communicating through social media with the social talent of the younger generation, then brands would be unstoppable, not only creating attention but also sales, loyalty and advocacy. Higher education should prep graduates for the business world and companies need more social training to help close the divide.
What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?

The number one marketing trend is not about a particular tool or channel but the trend in video including live streaming and visual types of interactions like virtual reality and augmented reality. Social media has been about relationships and engagement and the use of video. And it is not just about scripted video, but more so, unscripted videos coming from your fans and advocates.

Video and live streaming create an experience for the user and consumer. Marketing now is about these experiences.

Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?

Cognitive IoT is a platform that no one should underestimate. Being able to have social media data from IoT sensors and to not just analyze and predict but think and reason on a customer’s next step is essential in today’s market. Cognitive enables marketers to enhance the client experience by thinking and reasoning like them to offer them not just 1:1 marketing but on-target marketing.

Combining these two technologies together brings power beyond belief -- the data that clients are releasing on their health, their emotions, and their buying thought process is more accurate than them telling us directly. Every marketer should take a course in the potential of marketing in the cognitive era.

What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?

The biggest challenge is not a new one. It is how to measure the impact of social media tactics and influence on the business. Companies have become more obsessed with ROI since most are undergoing transformation. There are so many metrics out there and unlike in sales, there is no standard.

While technology and tools attempt to help, many still fail at being able to get down to the granular level that is needed to be effective.

Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?

Newsjacking or Trendjacking. Why? Because having a celebrity or hot trend will become so common place that it won’t have the impact that it is having today on channels like Snapchat. While at SXSW, we witnessed several examples of actors hijacking brand’s snapchat channels to bring in a new crowd. And while it worked brilliantly at this SXSW, I think if everyone did it the impact would be small.

Having brand advocates as a consistent part of your strategy -- especially when it is unpaid and authentic -- will be the way to the heart of the consumer.

Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?

My three wishes if I rubbed on a genie lamp would be:
1. I wish for the ability to measure the social media tactics individually and in aggregate over my entire business
2. I wish for more marketers who are savvy customer success managers and technologists
3. I wish for more executives to “get it”
What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?

Dark Social: The rise of mobile instant messenger apps and disposable. This is the most important because it marks a seminal shift from the era of open social to more closed and private networks.

Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?

FB Messenger and WeChat. WeChat because it is leading the way in the mobile instant messenger category and FB Messenger because of its scale and ambition to follow WeChat.

What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?

Ensuring that the necessary increase in pace and breadth (across many platforms) of content production does not result in lower creativity and effectiveness.

Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?

Brand newsroom: They do neither. They don’t build a brand and they don’t create news. People will realise that at some point in 2016.

Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?

That we move from a world where people no longer look for a social strategy, but for social deeply embedded within their strategy.
What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?

The biggest trend for 2016, and for some time to come, will be visual communication. The way in which we communicate is changing, moving away from the written word, even from the abbreviated words of txt speak from just over a decade ago. Video is a large part of visual communication but so increasingly are photos, gifs, filters and emojis. There are now over 1,600 standard emojis that have been absorbed into popular culture, vastly expanding language and allowing even faster and richer communication.

Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?

While it’s important to keep abreast of all developments, marketers should always pay most attention to the channels and platforms that their customers have indicated are important to them. If you’re a high-end car targeting a mainly older male audience, it’s unlikely that you will see much ROI from Snapchat geofilter campaign. If you’re a high street fashion brand, then LinkedIn is probably also not the place for your customers or you.

Smart marketers should be paying close attention to how, where and when people chose to interact with each channel and building their strategies around those insights.

That aside, the most interesting channels of the moment are Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook.

Snapchat and Instagram for how younger people are using them to interact and Facebook for its fairly recent focus on video. Facebook already attracts so much daily attention and it is heavily focusing on improving both the experience of video for its users, and for how brands can utilise it.

What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?

Less than two decades ago, marketers didn’t know much about their audience as individuals but they did know where they could find them. A 30 second TVC broadcast during a popular programme was usually enough to hit a good number of them. It was also within the hands of brand to decide when and where they wanted to interact with their customers.

Today, it’s possible to know a lot more about the singular likes and dislikes of a customer but finding them en masse is almost impossible. It’s also now the individual customer who can decide where, when and how they will interact with the brand. This means that the challenge to brands is how to create a cohesive, consistent and positive experience for their consumers.

Kerry is the community & communications director of MOFILM, which has won two Cannes Lions awards, a Silver for Branded Content in 2014, and a Bronze for best integrated campaign in 2012.

Kerry Gaffney, Director Community & Communication, MOFILM
@KerryMG
Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?

In 2016, brands will realise that trying to “own a moment” is not the most effective use of time, effort nor budget. While it’s difficult to deny the impact that one perfectly worded and timed tweet can have -- everyone can still recall Oreo’s “You can still dunk in the dark” moment during the 2013 Super Bowl -- the likelihood of achieving it is slight and reliant on not only having a great idea that is well executed but the structure and flexibility in place for immediate sign-off. Which is why Oreo’s is still held up as a best-in-practice example three years later.

Also like the perfect put-down or burn, unless it is something a brand can regularly replicate to an equally high standard, they run the risk of becoming known for just that moment.

The concept of viral videos might also disappear as brands finally realise that content creation without a sound distribution plan is a waste of budget and effort.

Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?

To break down the silos and stop putting mobile second. Almost all the most interesting things that can be done with social media overlap with other parts and functions of the business but still they operate as distinct units.

For example, the website, not just for working out how to make Social part of the broader customer journey but utilising CRM and web analytics to determine if social is driving valuable data capture and then using that information to create more effective social campaigns.
**What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?**

I think the three most important trends in marketing overall are: Respect, Empathy and Ethics. Digital amplifies these — especially in their absence.

Brands who truly respect their target audience avoid the creative clichés of old fashioned advertising. Empathy is a must for actionable insights. And, as we saw from Volkswagen and other examples, companies without Ethics face a social media firestorm as well as legal action.

**Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?**

I’m tempted to say Snapchat but that’s already an old answer. Although brands should pay super close attention to the way people use it with friends as a messaging platform, which is quite different to the ad driven passive content side.

I think we can learn a lot from newer niche platforms, like Nom for foodies or Tandem for fitness. They go against the one-size-for-all mentality driving the giant platforms. I like that because — as they are built specifically around passion points — they clearly have Respect and Empathy for their target users.

**What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?**

For me, it is the same challenge as ever, only larger now that social media needs to include paid media. That’s Creativity. How to make consistently awesome content that is both worth your user’s time & attention and communicates a memorable brand message.

The landscape now is Paid Social, Earned Social and Owned Social. Understanding that is a challenge as well, since many marketers were conditioned into thinking of social media as ‘free’ so therefore needing less time, budget, craft or creative firepower.

**Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?**

I think we all want the term ‘social media marketing’ to go away — it shouldn’t be a separate thing. All marketing activity can be digital and all digital can be social.

‘Engagement’ is probably already dead — even Facebook doesn’t talk much about that any more but use advertising words like awareness, reach and driving sales.

‘Viral’ needs to die. Achieving reach via paid ads or paid influencers is not ‘viral’.

**Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?**

Ok, I’ll say it.

My biggest wish is for H+K to win a Lion for one of our clients. Fingers crossed ;-)
What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?

Gone are the days when you could plan out your marketing well in advance and release them on your timetable. It's a real-time world now, and if you're not engaged, then you're on your way to marketplace irrelevance.

Marketers must develop a real-time mindset. A real-time mindset recognizes the importance of speed. It is an attitude to business (and to life) that emphasizes moving quickly when the time is right.

Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?

Newsjacking is the art and science of injecting your ideas into a breaking news story to generate tons of media coverage, get sales leads, and grow business. The channels that you can use to create content and get it into the marketplace include YouTube, blogs, and Twitter.

What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?

Many marketers steeped in the tradition of product advertising naturally feel drawn to prattle on and on about their products and services. But I have news for you. Nobody cares about your products and services (except you). Yes, you read that right.

What people do care about are themselves and how you can solve their problems. People also like to be entertained and to share in something remarkable. In order to have people talk about you and your ideas, you must resist the urge to hype your products and services. Instead, create something interesting that will be talked about online. When you get people talking on the Web, people will line up to learn more and to buy what you have to offer.

Most online marketing is nothing more than an alternative channel for the PR department or product marketers to spew their “messages” and “product vision.” Yuck.

Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?

 Anything with the phrase social media plus a number as in social media 2.0 and social media 3.0.

Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?

I wish we’d stop using the term social media and social media marketing because it has frivolous connotations. Social media are just the tools. What’s really changed is that for the first time in human history we now have real-time media to connect sellers with buyers instantly.
What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?

Make awesome content that people can’t ignore. That’s not really a trend I guess, but it’s all you should care about.

Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?

I would dare to say Facebook. They are doing so many things right at the moment. I think many of us are a bit jaded from past years’ experience with the platform. It makes you a little bit numb to all the good stuff they are doing now.

What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?

Being fast enough. I’ve seen so many great possibilities die because the train left the station yesterday or 2 hours ago.

Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?

I feel like a word only really becomes a buzzword when agencies are still struggling with how to deal with whatever phenomena the word was meant to describe. As soon as everyone is doing it to a decent level it ceases to be a buzzword.

What are we all going to start doing right in 2016?

Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?

I wish all brands would have some more fun. Loosen up. Show that there’s a human behind the keyboard. Burn the manual. Use common sense.
What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?

I think the most popular trend is that social media is becoming larger than just social media. It’s not about rapid fire content and bite-size entertainment, but rather tied into core marketing strategy. Social media is used for product development, concept testing, strategy creation and testing as well as the world’s largest focus group. So in a sentence, I’d say it’s becoming a strategic marketing asset.

Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?

It depends on the geography and reason for using the channels. Generally Twitter is the easiest to analyze, but it has limited reach in parts of the world. Facebook has the widest reach, but a lot of the content is not reachable by marketers. Then places like China have their own ecosystems all together. The key here is matching the channel Context, to the Content in order to create something relevant in Culture. All the 3C’s wildly vary according to brand, target group, geography and objectives. So in a summary, probably all of them, depends what you’re trying to do.

What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?

The biggest hurdle can be summarized as matching what you want to say, with what the audience in interested in. To get to this place, you need to understand what essentially is competing with you for the audiences time and create something more relevant to them – it also needs to leverage the strengths of the particular channels, so that you match the flow. It’s easy to find out what people like. And it’s easy to decide what you want to say, but finding the overlap is the creative part.

Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?

I hope it’s “Newsroom” — many brands have built teams that are tasked to create rapid-fire content that is totally devoid of strategy and purpose. Just trying to jump on a trend or a hashtag is a quick way to irrelevance in my opinion.

Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?

I wish that brands would see it as a strategic asset. A way to tap into the minds and hearts of their audience — not just a way to shove things down their throats, but as a way to understand, predict and use the thoughts and actions of their audience in a way that impacts the very thing the brand has set out to do.
What is the most important social media marketing trend for 2016?

I think 2016 will be the year when brands start to really take social media seriously. Frankly, most of the social content created by brands is uncreative and is just distracting noise for consumers. The big social networks have spent the last few years transforming themselves into sophisticated marketing platforms and yet most brands haven’t noticed. Over the next 12 months I expect more brands will wake up to the real potential of social media to build brands and drive bottom line returns, but it requires a whole new approach to social media marketing.

Which social media channel/platform marketers should pay close attention to?

I’m constantly fascinated by Snapchat. It’s ripped up the rule book and, despite its large but niche audience, is really showing brands that you need to think differently when creating social experiences that truly engage consumers. Their Discover platform is a great concept and some of the content being produced is really excellent. Time will tell whether it can (or needs) to grow its audience but I’m intrigued by what it will do next. It’s in stark contrast to some of the other ‘content platforms’ that the other social networks have rolled out recently.

What is the biggest challenge brands face using social media in their marketing activities in 2016?

The biggest challenge is moving from a ‘churning out content’ approach to carefully ensuring that you get the right content in front of the right audience at the right time. This means using data to segment your audience and really ensure your creative execution is getting in front of the right person. It’s challenging because it is the total opposite approach that most brands currently employ on social media.

Which buzzword/phenomenon/platform related to social media will become extinct in 2016?

I think the real-time marketing phase will begin to decline. While brands love patting themselves on the back when they are the first to come up with a tweet to piggyback on the latest ‘cultural trend’, usually these get reported in the marketing press but don’t tend to get wider consumer reach. It’s usually much ado about nothing. By all means create content around moments that matter for your audience but do it in a way that is strategic and thought-through, not a knee-jerk.

Your biggest wish regarding social media and social media marketing in 2016?

I really hope we can bring more creativity to social media through 2016. So many campaigns I see tend to be a rehash of something else or they take an ATL campaign and try to shoehorn it into social. I see more and more brands now looking to be social-first when it comes to their big creative thinking. As advertising moves away from TV I think (and hope) we’ll see more creative time being invested in ideas that are social by design.
See you at Cannes Lions Social Media Creative Academy.

>> ENROL NOW

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