

Paid Social Trends 2018

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Continued scrutiny, more robust quality measures and a greater accountability is needed in the social sector in 2018.

Quality and accountability

Last year was a challenging year for Digital generally and Social specifically and both are still riding the storm that came with brand safety, viewability and fake news. What has proved significant thus far this year is that the major digital players under the microscope as household brands in their own right have been catapulted out onto the world stage with press coverage going well beyond the core advertising concerns we faced last year. The year ahead will see little change in this intense and increased scrutiny, and rightly so. Customers have never had more information about their data; how it is stored, how it is used and what control they can exercise than at this moment in time. With GDPR around

the corner, this global wake-up call can only be a good thing for individuals. Arguably what should now emerge is a more accountable sector. There is, however, no room for rose tinted glasses; we're not there yet, but 2018 is already shaping up to be a year of increased regulation, improved 3rd party verification, media owner accountability, better controls for advertisers and users alike and a move away from the traditional race to the bottom of the CPM barrel with a greater emphasis on user experience and quality inventory.

Social messaging: more than an innovation tickbox

2018 will be a turning point for social messaging. Pinterest will be launching their own messaging product which will allow users to view Pins directly within their Facebook Messenger app Instagram Direct is starting to scale, capitalising on the success Facebook have seen in this space and encourage direct sharing within their user base and the latter have introduced a new format in the US which will allow advertisers to send people directly from newsfeed into WhatsApp. In the UK market, we're not quite at the lofty heights of WeChat integrations in the Asian markets, but this year Messenger will become more than a tick box in the innovation column. It is now a viable option for chatbots, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) opportunities and paid media opportunities are growing at a rate of knots. With Facebook's January algorithm update announcement, social messaging will certainly need a seat at the table this year.

Diversifying the user experience

Huge diversification from traditional newsfeed environments awaits us in 2018, capitalising on the now established full screen, totally immersive mobile ad units pioneered by Snap and successfully adopted and adapted in the form of Facebook Canvas and Instagram Stories. A huge part of the shift to this kind of formats has been video. All the social platforms are leveraging video as a fundamental part of their 2018 strategies; video as a standalone format, video as a full screen storytelling tool, video as part of a sponsorship package, exclusive video, live video, UGC video, original content video, long-form video, snackable video, pre-roll video, mid-roll video; the list goes on. The difference this year is

in the increasing shift from being served video in an in-feed environment to giving the user more control to search and discover video content on their own terms. Snap have had success in this area already and Facebook are in the process of commissioning a large amount of original content and making strides within 'Watch' in an attempt to rival the likes of YouTube and Netflix; understanding and learning how users adapt to this new approach will be an interesting development this year.

In the box

2018 will be a turning point for social media users, the way they use their preferred platform and the data they choose to share.

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