

BLU DIGITAL DIGITAL TRENDS





Digital Trends



With new concepts being designed for almost all aspects of our daily lives, the question is: What is next? We have been told about the possible introduction of Artificial intelligence and Virtual reality for Social Media and Ecommerce purposes. There has been the introduction of Artificial Intelligence and smartphone

automation over the last few years, making it easier for users to find answers to their questions and solutions to their problems with just their fingertips from wherever they may be. Automated jobs are lessening the need to have humans carry out jobs.

What was predicted to happen in Digital in 2017?



Artificial Intelligence and Automation

Automation is not something which is new, it's around every time we call a service if we need help. It won't go away, but the plan was for it to get better. At the same time, online customer service was planned to be automated as well, thanks to better AI and Chabot's that can understand our requests better than before.

More Jobs to be automated

There are already automated jobs that we come across each day, whether it's an oyster card machine or a self-service system at a supermarket. More businesses are using automation to allow customers or consumers to complete activities. Customers and consumers are speaking or interacting with automated systems for enquiries. Smart Machines and Artificial Intelligence, or in other words, advanced Learning Machines may replace 'low-skilled jobs'. An example of this is self-service machines which are now used in popular supermarkets such as Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose. Businesses are adopting this approach as it makes it easier for both customer and business to make a transaction. Businesses have bought into smart machines as it is a clever future investment.

Smartphone Automation

We saw smart devices gain in increased automation, where our phones are able to pick up our preferences automatically. On iPhone there is the famous feature of 'Siri' where it will carry out actions that we request. Smartphones are being built to pick up on our daily routines. As our phones pick up our preferences, how will people feel about a system knowing all their personal information?

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is something we saw mature in 2017; as we see brands not only partnering with digital savvy Snapchatters and YouTubers, but also co-creating original content that can't be found anywhere else.

Augmented Reality

AR is a major tool for companies who want to take their engagement levels to the next step. While AR technology is still in its infancy, it is beginning to catch on and the almost limitless possibilities it presents mean that it has huge potential. In 2012 there were 188 million downloads of AR apps. By 2017, it was expected that there would be 3.5 billion downloads.

37% of marketers are now dedicating a budget for influencer marketing. It was also revealed by Influencer Orchestration Network that Influencer campaigns have helped marketing professionals reach their target audience.

Digital predictions for 2018



Video Content

Video content is something that will gain popularity in 2018. More companies will aim to use video advertising to their advantage when it comes to promoting a certain hashtag or trend.

Mobile Vs Desktops

2017 was the era where desktop usage started to fade out. In 2018, there will be a complete dominance of Smartphones over the laptops used for ecommerce businesses as well as generating online traffic. We are using our smartphone devices for the majority of our daily tasks and this could lead us into many more mobile optimized applications and websites.

According to The Telegraph, 51% of mobile users access a website using their smartphone, where 48% of users access a website through a desktop. For more mature markets such as the UK and US, desktops still account for the majority of web pages, however, mobile web is rapidly catching up, and in some countries it is already more popular, such as in India where it now accounts for 75% of pages. The rise of mobile internet usage has been most prominent since October 2016 where it overtook desktop and laptop computers for the first time at 51.3%.

Authentic Visual

According to visuable.co.uk in 2018, an estimated 84% of communications will be visual. The likes of Snapchat and Facebook have increased the visual content which they advertise with.

Artificial Intelligence

According to The Motley Fool, AI Bot's will power 85% of customer service interaction by 2020. As figures suggest, many of us will find ourselves interacting with systems in order to complete transactions in the future. Tesco introduced their first self-checkout system in 2003. Over 60% of UK millennials say they appreciate retailers who use AI to offer them products that are more interesting. Gartner estimates that by 2020, more than three-quarters of retail customer interactions will be handled by AI agents.

Micro Moments

Digital marketers need to study insights and identify the micro moments of their target audience which means providing targeted advertising based on user information, such as the search terms they are using or their web history. Once you know what your consumer wants, make use of that info. The interactive experience you are providing offers value, in terms of offers, discounts, insights, exclusive experiences or information.

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- The Motley Fool

What does the future hold?

It seems as if the general public have now been accustomed to using automated systems to complete tasks. With the majority of UK millennials appreciating businesses who use AI, this could mean a higher amount of AI systems that are introduced in the coming year.

Based on the amount of web searches using their mobile, there seems to be a shift in terms of what devices are being used to browse the internet, we may be seeing the decline in desktop browsing as people require more portable methods of internet usage. Brands are becoming more

creative with their content in order to attract the attention of their target audience due to the amount of white noise that floods the internet every day.

Our personal information and preferences may look to be used to provide us with the perfect service. More jobs are becoming automated which could make it difficult for those looking for job opportunities in a certain field.



Blu Digital with Steven Light



We spoke to Steven Light, Head of Digital at Coutts, in regards to digital trends we should look out for in 2018. His predictions were as follows:

Personalisation

The differentiation gap of what features and functions online platforms can provide is narrowing. It becomes increasingly important to demonstrate that you know and understand your customer. This means serving them relevant content, services and products at the most relevant time to them. The biggest challenge here is that this doesn't fit the typical marketing lifecycle where services and products are promoted in campaigns aligned to timelines and business revenue cycles.

Open banking/PSD2

More than just a piece of financial services regulation, the fact that banks are being forced to open up API's for authorised companies to extract detailed transactional data on behalf of customers is a game changer. There will be a mad scramble to gather this data and provide pseudo-online banking services at an aggregate, cross-bank level. A person's transactional data can tell us a huge amount about their lifestyle and preferences.

Data protection

Digital is no different than any other channel in that regulation and legislation both opens and narrows avenue of opportunity. GDPR is another big one. Coupled with Brexit, for which we still don't understand how data criss-crossing the EU will be impacted, digital

infrastructure and data management are going to have to improvise and innovate quickly in order to both satisfy the legal requirements.

Augmented reality

VR is going to pave the way for AR and that process will start in earnest in 2018. The gamer crowd currently adopting VR are essentially funding the next wave of more socially interactive AR technology. The internet followed the same pattern. Originally tied to desktops, the internet became an isolating experience. Then came chat rooms and online gaming. Then came laptops, tablets and later, powerful handheld devices that could render the internet into a social environment.

The rise and rise of blockchain

This is amongst the most exciting digital innovations yet to be fully utilised. When businesses grasp the possibility of replacing any transactional ledger with an unbreakable historical chain that is disseminated across all parties involved in it, we're going to see the processing of digital payments shift to truly real time. Imagine your car's ownership and service history being held in a tamper proof, auditable log that anyone could interrogate but no one could alter without producing a version that doesn't match the broader disseminated record. It's security of information without a single point of failure, as is currently the case with large data centres or systems.



Social Media Trends



There has also been a mix in trends with some social media platforms having the same features. For example Snapchat introduced their story feature, which

allows users to record a short story that lasts 24 hours for their followers to see. Instagram, and more recently, Facebook have adopted that same feature.

What was predicted to happen in Social Media in 2017?



Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality - More brands to take up AR development in promoting more Augmented Reality applications after the success of Pokémon Go game in 2016.

Rise of the Chabots

Artificial Intelligence could now be seen as part of our daily lives or routine. We have digital assistants such as Siri and Google assistant which allow us to speak to our phones rather than pressing icons. With social media platforms beginning to use voice command systems as part of their services, it was predicted for more businesses to interact with their consumers more using Chabot's.

The dominance of mobile Social Media

In 2015, according to Marketing Land, 61% of time spent using social media was on a mobile device. Nearly 2.8 billion around the world use social media at least once a month and 91% of that is through a mobile device. According to Word stream, more than 50%

of all YouTube views are through a mobile device and almost 80% of time spent using social media is through a mobile device. As Snapchat is a mobile automated social media platform, it reaches 41% of 18 to 34-year-olds in the US.

Dark Social Marketing

With the popularity of instant messaging applications; there is more and more content being shared through email, WhatsApp and Facebook messenger. This means that companies will have to measure it carefully in order reduce the chances of it affecting their business.

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Social media predictions for 2018



Chatbots

Chatbots are the future. Customer service has transitioned from phone calls and emails to social media. Consumers are demanding instant replies to their questions and concerns, and they now turn to social media with problems and queries. Chatbots allow you to interact instantly, which is why Facebook Messenger bots especially are becoming so popular, setting one up is fairly simple and it can be done without cost.

Social media on mobile

Snapchat and Instagram are mobile focused Social Media platforms, Instagram is accessible through desktops, however users hardly access it on anything other than their mobile device. Facebook makes 84% of its advertising revenue from mobile. Therefore this poses the question; will people eventually move completely away

from their desktops and laptops to use Social Media on their mobile phones? With the success of Snapchat in terms of reaching its target audience, more businesses will introduce applications accessible for mobiles.

Video content

Video content is on the rise right now, and Facebook ads that feature video are attracting more engagement, which then provides more exposure. If it is done right, it will definitely contribute towards your business making more money. There is no doubt that we are moving into an era where automated systems will be a part of our lives whether that is at work, public services or for personal use. With the amount of data caught, generated from our mobiles, we are set for future social media applications to recognise our preferences with ease.

What does the future hold?

Chatbots seem to be a social trend that is going to dominate in 2018, as customer complaints and queries are dealt with more swiftly.

More and more users are accessing social media through their mobile phones; with 80% of US users accessing social media through their mobile phones, it is clear that we are going into 2018 with more users interacting on social media through their mobiles than ever.

The amount of influencers are growing and having a big impact on marketing, however they are all not guaranteed to succeed.

The importance of having a strategy when deciding to work with influencers will determine whether future campaigns will be successful.

The introduction and success of “stories” on various platforms could be on the increase in 2018, as well as the use of influencer marketing. With influencers increasing on the likes of Instagram and YouTube, brands will look to use this to their advantage when creating campaigns.

Blu Digital with Jackie Balchin



We spoke to Jackie Balchin, global Head of Social Media at Iflix, in regards to social trends we should look out for in 2018. Her predictions were as follows:

Chabots

I predict many businesses next year will look to integrate chatbots into their customer service. This presents the opportunity for a business to be able to reply to their customers promptly. However, chatbots could pose a challenge too as brands would move away from a personalised service using this technology and therefore could lose touch with their brand personality, chatbots could also cause problems if answers were too formulaic and the customer queries not answered.

Mobile-friendly content

This is very much a recurring theme however with platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram being mobile-only (yes Instagram does have a desktop version which is however severely underused), and 84% of Facebook's ad revenue being on mobile this year, marketers need to now more than ever ensure their content and campaigns are mobile optimised.

Even more social listening

I am obviously a little biased about this one as it has been my speciality field for some time now, but I believe that the role of a data scientist and listening tools will be at the heart of many organisations next year as more businesses understand the value of listening to

conversations. When I talk about listening I'm not simply referring to listening to brand or even competitor conversations but overall marketplace conversations too.

Potentially more platform selection

Many platforms now offer more or less the same features, but businesses need to look carefully at the differentiating factors before using all of them to ensure budget and content is targeted. The real differentiating factor in this case is the audience. So it's a real back to basics exercises to ensure businesses are using and putting resources in the correct platforms rather than spreading themselves on all if this is not necessarily needed. Businesses need to focus on where their audience is rather than be lured by the shiny new features.

More authenticity with influencers

This is where consumers are seeing through the influencer advert, and where influencers themselves have shunned filters and big brands in light of not losing their fan base. Brands need to choose their influencer and to an extent their online spokesperson carefully. They may find better partnerships using micro influencers which provide a more authentic touch. Influencers need to become a long term strategy where there is a clear synergy between brand and influencer, rather than a short term campaign.



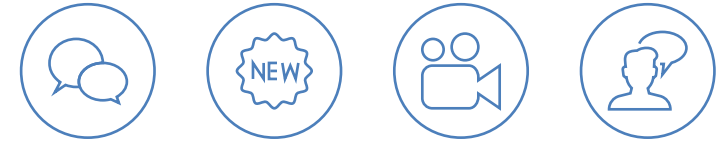
UX Trends



UX is an industry that has massive implications on companies as it can deliver value to customers as they shift from passive viewers to users. UX is an important emerging industry in a world

where usability is becoming a commodity. So here is a look back at 2017 in the world of UX and what the future looks like.

What was predicted to happen in UX in 2017?



Chatbots

There seems to have been a huge rise in the areas of chatbots and conversational interfaces, whereby human interactions in some cases have been limited to allow for more time saving designs. Marketsandmarkets estimate that between 2016 and 2021, the chatbot market is to grow at a compound rate of 35.2% and Business Insider expect that by 2020, over 80% of business are expected to have some sort of chatbot automation.

New platforms

There was a move away from traditional experiences as interfaces transcended to more inventive platforms and real life. One example of this was with Snapchat spectacles that were released this year in the UK. These had an immense demand and allow users a hands-free option to record their day without even needing to use their phone. This allowed for a seamless integration into the user's personal life.

Live Videos

More and more companies are picking up on the prominence and usefulness of live videos to broadcast, with social media sites like Twitter and Facebook now being able to support live streaming. Therefore UX designers have been accommodating to this trend by creating seamless integration of live video broadcast into their websites or apps. Studies have found that live video is more appealing to brand audiences with 80% preferring to watch a live video from a brand rather than read a blog.

Voice-enabled interaction

The rise of smart household technologies such as Amazon's Alexa or Google Home that allow users to ask questions, initiate commands and more in a similar fashion to Apple's Siri application. The user's experience is shifted from the 2D digital world to the physical world to create a more familiar format of experience. This category of interaction also has a lot of growth potential for the future as Gartner estimates that by 2018, 30% of all interactions with devices will be voiced based.

UX predictions for 2018



Looking into the future of UX may be difficult as it is a discipline that advances itself by looking at the past and what has worked well in the past. At the moment it is easier for us to identify future trends by looking at revitalising and reinterpreting existing techniques in new contexts.

Platform to platform experiences

A focus on platform to platform experiences that should remain relatively unseen by the user will become more and more relevant and desirable as more platforms become compatible with each other. This will allow the users experience to encompass more than one platform at a time with a seamless link. This will inherently create a more positive image for the brands that utilise this feature more so than the platforms. This will allow for a simpler experience for the user as there is only one interface to deal with rather than multiple for the different platforms.

Mary Meeker highlights the use of ads in social media sites as direct storefronts where the browsing happens within the ad but the purchase is finalised on a website or app. This experience of continuity will push UX designers to focus more on creating seamless narratives over various channels and platforms.

Virtual Reality

The Virtual Reality market is not only expanding but it is also worldwide. Bloomberg reports that the VR market in China will be \$8.5 billion and also that there at least 200 start-ups working in the industry. Therefore it is important that it is done right, especially regarding UX design.

Many different factors must be accounted for to create an integrated experience to allow the user to fully immerse themselves within this virtual world. While there has been a fair share of advancements with VR within the past year, it is clear that we are still yet to reach a place where VR is at its optimal stage of UX. Many companies still face bug troubles and limitations of space etc. Problems with UX within VR can create an almost unplayable environment for users therefore it is imperative that VR companies further advance their technologies to create the optimal user experience designs.

What does the future hold?

While it may seem that UX has been part of every business for a long time, a study by Enterprise on the UX industry found that 53% of their respondents (companies with over 500 employees) reported that a full time UX design role had existed in their company for less than 3 years. Therefore we can see that there is still a huge market and plenty of opportunities for future UX designing.

While automated UX designers and AI solutions may be possible in the future it is unlikely to occur anytime within the next couple years as the human touch behind UX is still as important than ever and maybe even more so within the near future. For example much of user research and testing will require emotional intelligence and behavioural understanding that at the moment is not imitable by a machine. In addition to this, the empathetic quality of human designers who can understand aspects of

meaningful visual design is invaluable.

However that is not to say that some aspects of the UX process may not begin to become automated within the near future as some processes could be hugely benefitted by machine generated experiences. Chatbots and other AI are just the beginning for automated UX, and a lot is still to come in the future. If technologies developed enough to imitate and replace the human need for UX design then we can expect a huge shift in how UX is developed and approached.

Experiences are easily memorable when they're executed impressively and are even more memorable when users are confronted with a bad one. Therefore it is important for companies to strive to create positive, streamlined and intuitive user experiences.

Blu Digital with Maria Kontogiorgou



We spoke to Maria Kontogiorgou, Head of UX at Kinetic Analysis, in regards to UX trends we should look out for in 2018. Her predictions were as follows:

The need for user-friendly / user centred experience is growing. The audience becomes rapidly familiar with the use of the user centred experience. This is essentially one of the primordial reasons for development and evolution of the field as the users / audience becomes more demanding than ever before.

The User experience standards will be higher day by day, but at the same time “repetitive” in most of the cases, in terms of interface design / output. The User experience designer will search for space to flourish into different directions and enrich the overall experience with the new challenges.

A holistic User Experience approach will include a day to day actions than “screens or devices only”. Every aspect of life will be an opportunity for a user-friendly experience and the audience will expect for it otherwise it will seem boring. Excitement will be reached via unique experiences at every level of our digital transformation era.

The User Experience that builds user Interfaces only, reaching its dead era I would say If I wanted to exaggerate or its patterned era if I

want to be realistic. The User experience expertise as we know it today will only facilitate the already standardized processes of the Interface design. Libraries and pre-made apps will deliver first class UX while the user's data will be visualized into tangible interfaces from junior designers.

The Customer experience and the User experience will come into a synergy and it will be hard to differentiate them as different in the future. User Experience Designers will be divided into four levels;

1. The Creative User Experience designer,
2. Technical User experience (implementer),
3. Content creation User Experience and the
4. Researcher.

Soft skills will be the apogee of the 2018 - UXers with soft skills that can communicate properly complex technological structures and UXers that think out of the box and will fuse VR, AI and MR to all kind of new digital madness. Let's enjoy it!



Ecommerce Trends



In 2014, it was found that more than 75% of UK shoppers over the age of 15 bought something online according to Buiness.com, that was only the beginning of the trend. There had been a

huge spike in the online shopping development as opposed to shopping in stores. Here are a few 2017 trends as well as predictions for what is to come for the upcoming year.

What was predicted to happen in Ecommerce in 2017?



Businesses are using API

(Application Program interface) which allows companies to manage an incredibly high volume of transactions. API opens doors for multiple platforms to tie together in an ecosystem that is fast and flexible. Examples of the businesses that rely on API are PayPal and eBay. Both are extremely popular and used by millions because they are able to buy and sell their own products fast and with minimal fuss.

Payment transaction

This has changed from putting in your pin into card machines to now, using the 'Contactless' feature that can be used in stores and for travel purposes. The contactless feature allows for money transactions to take place within a quick second or two of your time.

Content marketing

This is a huge trend this year in reference to digital marketing techniques. SEO (Search engine optimization) is no longer the go-to technique as it had been in 2016. Content marketing specifies on ensuring that each person has been given their own individual experiences and constructing the content to be more personal. Customers prefer this as they are being given exactly what they want and like as a result of this.

Omnipresence of Mobile

Mobile internet usage overtook the likes of desktop browsing in late 2016 and it is becoming clear that this is a trend that is manifesting itself into every aspect of digital, including e-commerce. However another aspect of mobile usage that has boomed in 2017 has been the rise of mobile transactions and payment. This trend can also be used in integration with third party applications as well as a company's own app, resulting in better data collection of consumer's habits and purchases. This can help a business create customised loyalty programmes for individual consumers resulting in higher satisfaction for the customer.

Convenience

According to Brandwatch, many retailers now are offering same day delivery deals. A Forrester report stated that 29% of consumers are even willing to pay more for the convenience of a same day delivery. While this may add strain and complications onto the company offering the service, as well as often not giving profit, it adds brand value and consumer satisfaction that can result in repeat purchases. While Amazon were considered leaders in the same day delivery business, many other businesses have capitalised on this value building offer, such as Argos, Tesco and Sainsbury's.

Ecommerce predictions for 2018



Interface Imperialism

This is where the larger tech companies are diversifying their offers and expanding their entire range of services under one interface, it is known that if you own the interface, you own the customer. For example, screens are currently the primary user interface, but it is swiftly declining in use as a newer, less visible form of interface has been created and that has now been familiarized with the voice of the internet. Look at Siri, Cortana, Amazon Echo and Google Assistant, they are all quickly on the rise.

Mobile integration

According to Magento, many businesses are finding that a large percentage of their customers are using their mobile devices to shop. This would mean ensuring that companies have an app or form of website that the consumers are able to access and use with ease. An example of this would be large businesses such as ASOS who have their own webpage as well as an app for easy access on any smartphone or tablet. There are also smaller businesses such as fashion inspired companies on Instagram, who use this social media platform in order to sell their products.

We spoke to Georgios Chiotis, who is head of Online and Ecommerce at Generator hostels. He had the following view:

Augmented reality has been a slow whisper in 2017 with Snapchat introducing specific filters with the rear facing camera, however it is going to make considerable noise in 2018 with iPhone X hitting the market. This means that AR will become more accessible than ever to the wider market and this will enable retail and hospitality to become as creative as they wish to be. From virtual changing rooms and furniture showrooms in your living room to making your meal more insta-worthy and bringing your hotel's pool to life – the possibilities will be endless.

Also, creativity and playful uses of technology will be vital to engage users in advertising. We saw this happening in 2017 with Burger King (asking google what is a Whopper) and South Park (with Cartman talking to Alexa) when they brought to life viewer's devices at home simply by asking triggering questions – this made one screen (their TV) activate their secondary screen or smart home devices to look up their products or simply troll them. Activities like this engages consumers in different ways and gains a lot of traction on social and press, increasing the reach of the message far beyond the original audience.

What does the future hold?

When extracting the information for 2017 and 2018 you can immediately understand what the possibilities could be when looking at digital trends in Ecommerce. 2017 is a year of evidence to back up the fact that the process of money transaction is getting simpler and quicker. With that, contactless may go one step further by making more effective ways to pay and travel. Another estimate is maybe being able to pay through touch screen monitors by simply tapping your contactless card or phone with Apple Pay. Of course this is only a prediction of what is to come next as the possibilities are endless.

The future could also mean to understand the concept of personalizing individual experiences for each customer, in other words, companies should be focusing on what their customers seek on a more

personalized level. This would mean having to possibly create a new marketing plan and placing more time and money into their market research in order to achieve this goal as this could be a very complex process. A few apps currently are able to further collect accurate data from their visitors and with that, are able to create better, and more personalized profiles. If apps are already able to perform this task, companies could in theory, build off of that platform.

Magento proposes that in the next two years, mobile applications will provide 50%+ of a website's traffic which implies that businesses should have their own apps in order for their customers and clients to access them on smartphones and tablets, as this will be their main source of using business websites and for shopping online.

Blu Digital with Jack Stevens



We spoke to Jack Stevens, Head of Ecommerce at OKA, in regards to ecommerce trends we should look out for in 2018. His predictions were as follows:

Companies are continuing to invest in developing a more flexible delivery and fulfilment solution for its customers. Customers nowadays are becoming increasingly used to same-day delivery, next-day delivery, picking time slots. I think we will continue to see more of a focus on pushing these elements as USPs, with a mix of speed and flexibility in mind. Same day delivery is useful, but not if you are not in to take the parcel in, so if you have flexible delivery, which enables you to pick a specific evening slot, this is arguably more useful than just getting it same day.

I also expect to see the uptake of brands offering secure storage to collect your item increase. This feeds into the same point about flexibility and ease of collection of goods.

Sophisticated personalisation I think will soon become a necessity rather than a luxury as consumers expect to be shown things that are

relevant to them. This will stem further than just through "recently viewed" and elements of display advertising to bespoke journeys through the complete buying cycle. Homepages, upsells, cross sells, purchase process, fulfilment, post purchase programmes. This will definitely be a growing trend.

Finally, I would expect to see an investment in brands trying to reduce returns as these often have a big hit on profit margins and logistic costs. Again, through personalisation, and better product descriptions, imagery and content, brands will try to create the feeling you can get in store of picking a product up, touching it, seeing the finish etc. 360 product images, product videos (where applicable) amongst some of the things that I expect to see much more frequently used across retailers in the coming months.

Contact us

Our offices are based in Moorgate, the nearest London underground stations being Moorgate (Metropolitan and Northern lines), Liverpool Street (Hammersmith & City, Circle and Metropolitan lines), Monument (District and Circle) and Bank (Northern and Central).

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