

QUICK INSIGHTS

Three Digital Marketing Predictions for 2021 and Beyond.

Discover emerging trends and how they could inform your next marketing plan.

The post-pandemic shift to working from home has made digital marketing more important than ever before, and it's likely not going anywhere. A PwC survey of remote workers revealed that nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of employees actually want to continue working from home at least two days a week.¹

So, what has 2020 taught digital marketers about adapting to this new reality, and what can we expect in 2021?

This short resource provides a quick summary of three emerging digital marketing trends we anticipate seeing in 2021 and beyond.

1. Non-linear journeys will become the norm.

The linear progression model for business buying is quickly on its way out. As digital transformation accelerates, marketers are connecting with prospects and customers through more digital channels than ever before. This gives buyers more opportunities to discover helpful content, but it has also made the buyer's journey much more complex and time-consuming.

According to a Forrester Consulting survey of 1,023 business executives with responsibility for enabling, creating, or participating in customer experience and engagement, B2B buyers interact with more than 15 touchpoints before making a decision:²

- Before a prospect becomes a lead: 5.4
- Before a lead becomes a sales qualified lead: 5.5
- Before a sales qualified lead becomes a closed sale: 6.2

All this information can be overwhelming to business buyers. Most (77 percent) say they find B2B shopping complex,³ and 75 percent report that they're spending more time researching purchases.⁴

In 2021, we predict that nonlinear journeys will be ubiquitous. We also anticipate that marketers will succeed by delivering just the right amount of highly personalized and contextually relevant information at every stage of the buyer's journey.

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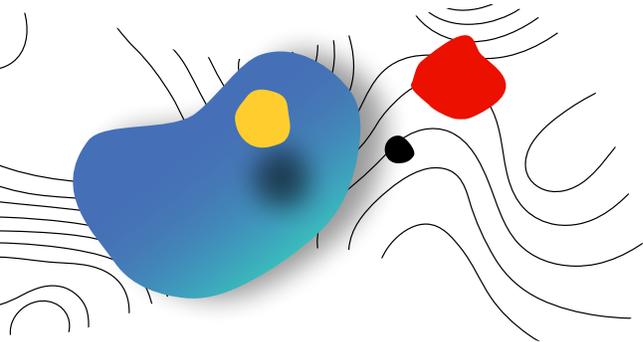


2. Privacy will remain in the spotlight.

As digital marketing technology evolves, your customers and prospects will become increasingly concerned about privacy issues and the types of data that marketers should, and should not, be able to track. Due to these increased concerns, more than 100 countries—66 of them with developing or transition economies—have put legislation in place to secure the protection of data and privacy.⁵ And almost half (46 percent) of US organizations named “compliance beyond the GDPR” (General Data Protection Regulation) as their highest priority.⁶

Cyberattacks and other threats to data security continue to rise as well, heightening privacy fears even further. Since March 2020, cyberattacks have spiked 400 percent.⁷ And only 10 percent of consumers feel they have total control over their personal information.⁸

In 2021, we predict that privacy will remain in the spotlight and that governments will continue to add new laws and regulations. To address emerging requirements, digital marketers will need to flex their adaptability muscles and look for new, innovative ways to engage with their audiences, all while complying with the latest privacy rules.



3. Artificial intelligence will be a must-have for marketers.

Today’s business buyers expect B2B brands to deliver personalized, “consumer-like” experiences. And consumers have high standards: 66 percent of them say content that isn’t personalized would stop them from making a purchase. But in times of continuing economic uncertainty, marketers must deliver personalized experiences without raising costs.

Enter artificial intelligence (AI), which is fast fulfilling its potential as a marketing tool. Last year, CMO Survey respondents reported a 27 percent increase in the use of AI and machine learning.⁹ A majority of the responding companies use AI for content personalization and predictive analytics for customer insights and targeting decisions.

In 2021, we predict that investments in AI will be commonplace for digital marketers across virtually all industries. The return on these investments in AI will be substantial as digital marketers use it to find the right audience, reduce cost per click, personalize the digital experience, and much more.

Prepare to succeed.

Learn more about digital marketing and how you can be successful in the New Year and beyond:

[Marketo’s Secrets to Digital Marketing](#)

[The Definitive Guide to Digital Marketing](#)

¹ PwC, US Remote Work Study, June 2020.

² Guiding The New B2B Buyer from Attraction to Advocacy, Forrester, August 2020.

³ “The New B2B Buying Journey,” Gartner, 2019.

⁴ 2019 B2B Buyers Survey, Demand Gen.

⁵ UN: <https://unctad.org/page/data-protection-and-privacy-legislation-worldwide>

⁶ IAPP: <https://iapp.org/resources/article/iapp-ey-annual-governance-report-2019/>

⁷ MSSP Alert, FBI: Covid-19 Cyberattacks Spike 400% in Pandemic.

⁸ PwC: <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/library/consumer-intelligence-series/cybersecurity-protect-me.html>

⁹ The CMO Survey: https://cmosurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/The_CMO_Survey-Highlights-and_Insights_Report-Aug-2019-1.pdf

