

# 2019 SEARCH TRENDS

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST  
OF FIVE KEY SEARCH  
TRENDS IN 2019



FEBURARY 2019

**ClickZ**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

 **CHATMETER**  
LOCAL BRAND MANAGEMENT



# CONTENTS

<b>Section 1.</b> Introduction to the state of digital marketing .....	<b>01</b>
<b>Section 2.</b> Introduction to the survey and full survey results – what can be drawn from the data .....	<b>03</b>
<b>Section 3.</b> Change of customer behavior driven by technological developments: Mobile, AI, AR, IoT .....	<b>06</b>
<b>Section 4.</b> Data protection, privacy, and regulation .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Section 5.</b> The rise of voice search .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Section 6.</b> Machine learning .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Section 7.</b> Personalization .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Section 8.</b> Honorable mentions .....	<b>24</b>
<b>Section 9.</b> Conclusion .....	<b>27</b>



# INTRODUCTION TO THE STATE OF DIGITAL MARKETING

**The digital marketing landscape is so versatile and dynamic these days that it's really hard to keep up.**

Just a few years ago, ranking in the top five Google positions was the ultimate goal of a digital marketer. But these days, digital marketing is much more integrated and technology-driven.

Digital marketing continues to be defined and refined by fast-evolving technology. In fact, it's moving so fast that it's starting to feel a bit like a sci-fi movie. We have smart assistants conducting searches and buying on

consumers' behalf, intelligent customer support bots driving consumers' shopping decisions, and smart applications predicting your competitive edge in the next few years.

Just a couple of years ago, you may have thought these things might be the distant future of digital marketing. And now, ready or not, you are living in that future already.

To stay competitive, every business should keep on top of key technologies and innovations that will drive change in the marketing industry.

For search marketing in particular, the industry remains extremely polarized since Google owns around 90% of the market -- but this doesn't mean it's stale. Google has to adapt to emerging technologies too, catering to the new ways consumers use search to find answers and discover products.

To keep up with the fast growth of mobile and voice search, Google's search algorithm and search engine result pages (SERPs) are changing rapidly. These changes present even more challenges to businesses trying to maintain their search presence.

This whitepaper will explain the most significant digital marketing trends posed to provide massive challenges and opportunities for businesses in 2019 and beyond. For each major trend, it will also outline actionable steps to incorporate those trends into your marketing strategy.

---

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEY AND FULL SURVEY RESULTS

WHAT CAN BE DRAWN FROM THE DATA



**This whitepaper is based on a survey conducted by ClickZ<sup>1</sup> in partnership with Chatmeter<sup>2</sup>, the all-in-one local brand management platform. The survey data was collected from 700 US-based marketers in November 2018.**

The following trends were listed in the survey:

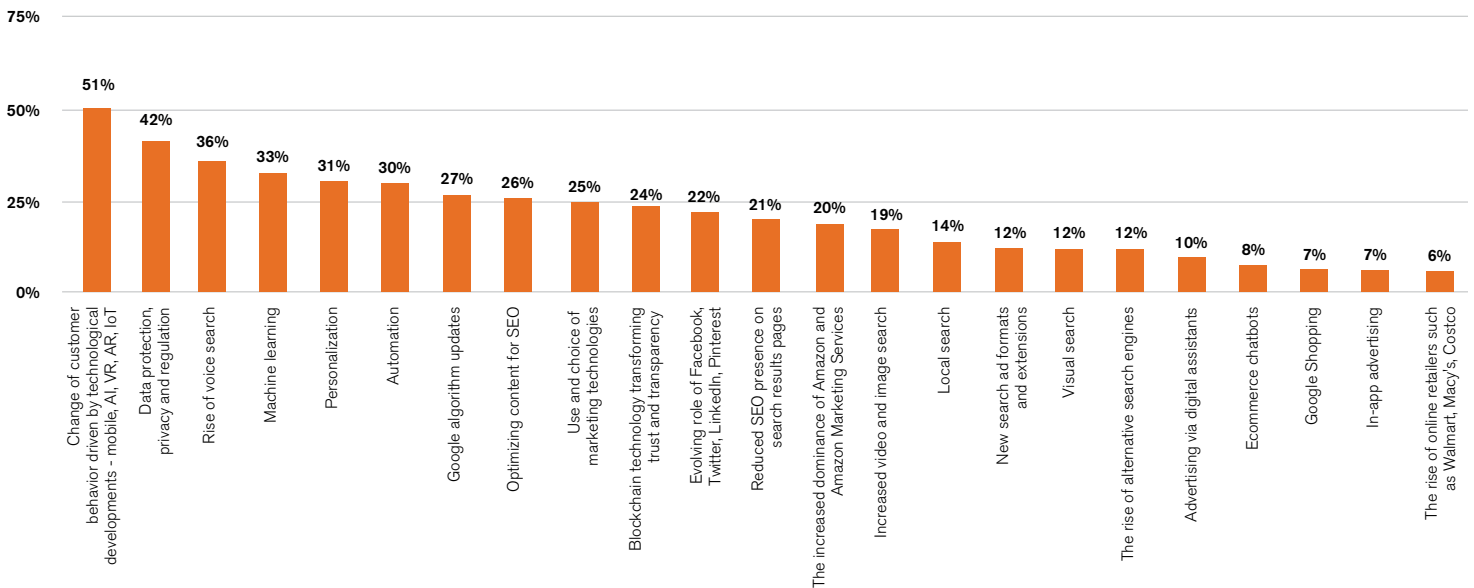
- Change of customer behavior driven by technological developments: Mobile, AI, AR, IoT
- Blockchain technology transforming trust and transparency
- Personalization
- Machine learning
- Automation
- Use and choice of marketing technology  
Data protection, privacy, and regulation
- The rise of voice search
- The rise of alternative search engines



- Increased video and image search
- The increased dominance of Amazon and Amazon Marketing Services
- The rise of online retailers such as Walmart, Macy's, and Costco
- Google algorithm updates
- Optimizing content for SEO
- The evolving roles of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest
- New search ad formats and extensions
- Visual search
- Google Shopping
- Advertising via digital assistants
- Ecommerce chatbots
- Reduced SEO presence on search result pages
- In-app advertising
- Local search

The survey participants were requested to select the five trends they believed would provide the biggest opportunities and challenges to digital marketing in general -- and search visibility in particular -- in the next 12-18 months.

The survey results looked like this:



The overwhelming majority of survey participants (50.7%) chose “Change of customer behavior driven by technological developments” as the biggest challenge and opportunity impacting marketing in 2019 and beyond.

“Data protection and privacy regulation” came next, followed closely by “the rise of voice search” with ~41.9% and ~36.1% (respectively) of respondents having chosen these as the biggest upcoming marketing challenges and opportunities.

After these, “machine learning” and “personalization” were each selected by nearly one-third (33.2% and 31.1%, respectively) of marketers as important technology-driven trends influencing digital marketing.

The following three trends also deserve an honorable mention, with over a quarter of marketing professionals believing they will influence their marketing decisions this year:

- Automation, 29.9%
- Google algorithm updates, 26.6%
- Optimizing content for SEO, 26.3%

In the following sections, we’ll take a closer look at the top five trends that will provide challenges and opportunities for digital marketing in 2019 and beyond.

# CHANGE OF CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR DRIVEN BY TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

MOBILE, AI (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE),  
AR (AUGMENTED REALITY), IOT (INTERNET OF THINGS)

## Why is this a trend?

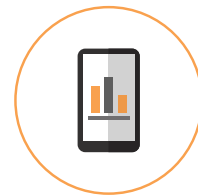
Technology is disrupting the way consumers discover, research, compare, and buy products online.

Only a few years ago, buying intent was the first step to making an online purchase.

Consumers used online search mostly to find products they knew they needed.

These days, the buying process is much more complicated and fragmented.

Let's discuss each of these technological developments separately:



## Mobile evolution: Impacting all marketing areas, including discovery and on-site interactions

From discovery (search, ads, etc.) to interaction with your site and brand assets, the mobile evolution is influencing every step of the buyer's journey.

According to Google<sup>3</sup>, mobile searches surpassed desktop searches in May 2015.



By 2017, mobile devices accounted for half of web page views<sup>4</sup> worldwide.

More recent research from Google claims that more than half (51%)<sup>5</sup> of smartphones users have discovered a new company or product while searching on their phones.

This means many more people are bound to discover your brand while using their mobile devices rather than their desktop computers.

Beyond discovery, further interaction with your brand may be happening on mobile devices as well.

In 2018, consumers spent three and a half hours a day<sup>6</sup> on their smartphones. That includes reading emails (think about your email marketing campaigns) and shopping (in 2017 over 40%<sup>7</sup> of online transactions were already done on mobile).

Due to mobile's fast growth, the buyer's journey **has become more fragmented**. Shoppers can more easily perform on-the-go purchases. Stores can offer instant mobile payments as an option.

Overall, the mobile experience has caused a boost in **impulse shopping**.

Consumers turn to mobile devices to **fulfill an immediate need**. According to Google<sup>8</sup>, 91% of their users turn to mobile devices for inspiration while in the middle of the task. New consumers are "well-advised," "right here" and "right now." Google also introduced<sup>9</sup> the term "**micro-moments**" to describe consumers' **expectation of an immediate answer in the moment** they want to know, go, do, and buy.

---

**[THANKS TO MOBILE,] MICRO-MOMENTS HAVE BEEN ACCELERATING CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS FOR "RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW" EXPERIENCES. PEOPLE TAKE FOR GRANTED THAT INFORMATION IS AT THEIR FINGERTIPS AND TAILORED TO THEIR SPECIFIC NEEDS.**

---

Hence mobile websites need to be optimized for "micro-moments," satisfying the consumer's immediate needs

instantly. Your website needs to engage customers quickly at each touchpoint, making the purchasing experience as fast and hassle-free as possible.



**AI (artificial intelligence): Giving consumers what they want or need before they know they do**

Artificial intelligence (AI), i.e. teaching machines to **think and react** like human beings, is a fast-growing branch of computer science affecting all areas of our lives, including -- not surprisingly -- marketing. Based on public companies' data, 75% of what people watch<sup>10</sup> on Netflix and 35% of what they buy on Amazon come from product recommendations based on AI-driven algorithms.

This means **consumers use traditional search less and less**. Their buying decisions are increasingly influenced by AI algorithms and personalized recommendations.

Once they've engaged with a site, a customer becomes tied to a brand forever. From that point on, AI can provide personalized ads, product recommendations, and email marketing campaigns targeting each individual consumer in a meaningful way.



### **IoT (Internet of Things): Creating new, in-home shopping channels**

The Internet of Things (IoT) is the internet-powered network of smart devices that connect, interact with, and exchange data. The best known smart devices that have already found their ways into our lives are smartwatches, smart security systems, smart speakers, self-driving cars (partially), and smart homes.

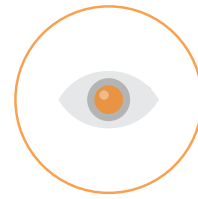
IoT growth is astounding: An expected 20.4 billion IoT devices<sup>11</sup> will be purchased and used by 2020, according to analyst firm Gartner.

With smart inter-connected devices, everything in the consumer's house suddenly becomes an ecommerce channel driving and automating shopping behavior.

Currently, the closest example of IoT integration into marketing are the Amazon Dash Buttons reminding you to re-order your previously purchased products based on your shopping patterns.

In the not-so-distant future, there will be kitchen appliances that can follow the recipes, create grocery lists based on those recipes, and even buy items from the lists independently.

Apart from autonomous shopping decisions and technology-powered purchasing experiences, IoT also opens up the ability to leverage the data those devices collect. That data can be used to understand customers' needs for advanced personalization and machine learning capabilities.



### **AR (augmented reality): Transforming shopping experiences**

Augmented reality (AR) is about overlaying (i.e. "augmenting") virtual objects on top of a real-world environment (often by using the camera on a smartphone).

Unlike virtual reality that shuts the real physical world down completely, AR **enhances** the real world. It becomes an effective tool for marketing by allowing buyers to test the product in the real-world context.

#### ***"Can you imagine utilizing this in your business?"***

That's an important question that AR can answer in a most convincing way when applied to marketing. The basic idea is that the consumer is much more likely to invest in something **they can "see themselves" having.**

Here are a few examples of AR-empowered marketing:

- **IKEA Place**<sup>12</sup> offering you to virtually “place” IKEA products in your room.
- **Topology Eyewear**<sup>13</sup> offering you to try their eyeglasses on before you buy them.
- **Timberland**<sup>14</sup> building a virtual fitting room (known as magic mirror) that offers consumers a way to try on their newest clothes without physically trying them on.
- **Sephora’s “Virtual Artist”**<sup>15</sup> allowing you to virtually overlay your makeup choices on your face and to buy the look you liked.

There are many more examples<sup>16</sup> of AR but the overall idea is simple: Once you see the product in your real environment, it becomes next to impossible to reject buying it.

## What does the future hold for this trend?

While technological advances are exciting to watch, in most cases they bring increasing challenges for smaller businesses and independent retailers.

As shopping becomes increasingly automated and at the same time personalized, smaller retailers risk getting cut out as bigger brands go directly to consumers.

IoT commerce may eliminate the consideration/research phase for consumers completely. This would make it next to impossible to compete with the consumer’s “default” choice.

On the other hand, advanced AI-powered personalization means tying a customer even closer to one single brand they chose to buy from once.

Is there anything businesses can do to get ready for a technology-disrupted marketing future?

Well, yes.

## What should we be doing?

**Think “mobile first”:** It’s no longer enough to have a mobile-friendly website. You need more mobile assets to better serve customers.

Examples of mobile assets to invest in include mobile apps and in-game mobile marketing.

Even if you lack the budget for the standalone assets, you still need to take smaller steps to mobile-friendly brand discovery and optimization.

- Create mobile-focused (i.e. simplified) CTAs and lead generation forms.
- Create faster, clutter-free conversion funnels allowing “Buy now” one-click options.
- Optimize for local searches. Let’s not forget that “Near me” is one of the most popular mobile search queries. Investing in efficient management of your business’s local listings is one the most effective ways to be discovered through mobile search.

- Use third-party plugins to integrate mobile experience enhancing features. Examples include integrating auto-complete for your in-site search engines (for quicker product discovery), faster mobile opt-in options, etc.

**Go with the “big” guys:**

**Ensure your brand has a strong Amazon presence.**

Apart from being a powerful shopping platform, Amazon is also a search engine. Even if they know your brand already, more and more consumers tend to turn to Amazon’s search box to find your products on Amazon and buy them from there. Not having an Amazon presence means forcing your customers to buy from someone else. The good news is that joining Amazon means integrating your products into their AI-powered suggestion algorithm for more discovery opportunities.

**Join Google Shopping**

**Actions:**<sup>17</sup> Google is not just a search engine. It’s also a powerful IoT player. With its new Shopping Actions program, they try to connect many dots: “A shopper can add an item to their cart after

searching for it on Google.com, and then add something else to the cart via voice shopping later, for example. Consumers are then able to purchase everything at the same time. The ability to mix and match their shopping processes may make them less likely to abandon their shopping carts.” Joining the program means creating a more integrated, cross-device and cross-platform shopping experience for your customers.

**Embrace chatbot marketing.**

Gartner predicts<sup>18</sup> that at least a quarter of all customer service operations will “integrate virtual customer assistant (VCA) or chatbot technology across engagement channels by 2020, up from less than 2% in 2017.” Letting a smart chatbot help your customers in the moment they need it is easier than many people think.

There are already several powerful platforms allowing businesses to create Facebook chatbots using easy visual dashboards, with no programming knowledge required. Chatbot marketing is the easiest way to integrate AI into your marketing strategy. It’s also a great way to optimize for the mobile-driven impulse shopping experience (a chatbot is always there to help your customer choose the best product, even when you are not).

**Use progressive web apps (PWAs)**

to offer your site users a mobile app-like experience without having to invest in a standalone app. PWAs behave just like mobile apps. They include the ability to use your site in an offline mode, receive mobile push notifications, and access your site from the phone home screen:

	WEBSITE	MOBILE APP	PWA
<b>Delivery</b>	Loads from a mobile browser	Can be accessed from a user’s home screen	Can be accessed from a user’s home screen
<b>Offline functionality</b>	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Installation</b>	N/A (it is not intalled)	App store	From web page (no need to go to app store)

# DATA PROTECTION, PRIVACY, AND REGULATION



## Why is this a trend?

2018 saw two huge privacy-related scandals, both of which increased concerns about overall online privacy issues.

The Facebook data leak at the beginning of 2018 resulted in the collection of personally identifiable information of “up to 87 million people.” (Which presumably may have been used to influence a few of the biggest political developments of preceding years.)

As if one major breach were not enough, Google Plus was caught failing to disclose

a user data leak later the same year, following the announcement of the project closure.

It's no wonder that privacy regulation has become a huge trend in 2018 affecting marketing in 2019 and beyond.

Since the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) took effect in May 2018 in



the EU, brands have been required to build privacy settings into their digital products and websites. And since most digital brands are global, that includes businesses beyond just the EU.

GDPR includes four key areas: Data permission, data access, data focus, and data storage.

**Data permission:** Leads need to specifically confirm that they want to be contacted (when opting in).

**Data access:** Leads need to have access to their data to remove it.

**Data focus:** Marketers can only collect data they need (no extra “just in case” data).

**Data storage regulation:** Businesses must store data for the shortest time possible and define time limits by when the data must be deleted or anonymized.

## What does the future hold for this trend?

As collected private data becomes more extensive, and AI-powered personalization enables more enhanced consumer experiences, the privacy dialogue is also getting more mature.

There's no denying the fact that new technology is changing the perception of “private” information. Consumers tend to be willing to compromise privacy for the sake of convenience.

The future lies in striking the balance between privacy and convenience, and in promoting transparency around that balance.

The more open brands are in how they are using the data, and the more control the consumer gets, the more consumers may be willing to share their data.

Amazon already strives to promote both balance and transparency by showing the customer exactly why they saw specific product suggestions, and enabling

the user to remove any signal from their suggestion algorithm.

In the future, even more brands will follow the pattern of enabling consumers to view and control how their private data is being used for better customer experience.

## What should we be doing?



**Incentivize data sharing and ask for consent.**

The good news, thanks to companies like Amazon and Netflix, is that most of your customers will be willing to create an account at your site (or install your app) if you do a good job of explaining the benefits (e.g. offer personalized virtual assistance, personalized meal plans, etc.).



**Think twice  
before  
emailing your  
list.**

Do you really have users' consent to send them emails? For a long time, it was standard practice to grab your whole database of past customers' emails and include them on your opt-in list for further deals and product updates. But with new regulations taking effect, you may find yourself risking fines by using old email lists. Even emailing past customers to encourage them to opt-in seems to put you in a grey area. So instead of using a questionable list, find other ways to reach those old customers of yours. For example, use that old email database to create a new custom Facebook Audience. Putting your brand in front of them through Facebook Ads is a much safer tactic.



**Give users  
power to  
remove their  
information.**

If you have a user area enabled for your site (e.g.

customers can login to see their past orders), make sure there's a "Delete account" button allowing them to remove their data from your site completely.



**Adjust your  
privacy  
policies  
and settings.**

Finally and obviously, tweak your privacy policy and settings for GDPR compliance.

# THE RISE OF VOICE SEARCH



## Why is this a trend?

With the fast adoption of smart mobile devices and the consequent “on-the-go” interaction with brands, it’s no wonder voice search is gaining popularity.

Google revealed<sup>19</sup> that 20% of voice search was performed through mobile devices. This means that one-fifth of mobile phone users **speak to their devices** to perform searches.

By 2020, 50% of all searches<sup>20</sup> will be performed through voice. And according

to Hubspot<sup>21</sup>, the number of voice queries grew exponentially between 2008 and 2017, increasing by 3,400%.

It seems that once tried, voice search easily becomes a daily habit. Nine in 10<sup>22</sup> consumers use a voice assistant on their phone -- 41% of them **use it daily** and 33% use it once a week.

The fast adoption of voice-activated smart speakers is another reason for the growing popularity of voice search.

One in six Americans (16%)<sup>23</sup> already owns a smart-speaker. By the end of 2022, half of US households<sup>24</sup> will have one. Voice commerce as a whole is projected to be a \$40 billion<sup>25</sup> industry.

Local businesses are the ones most influenced by this trend, as multiple research studies show:

- For local-based search queries, voice search is **3x more likely<sup>26</sup> to be used** than text search.
- More than half (58%)<sup>27</sup> of US-based voice search users have used voice search to find local business information in the last 12 months. 46% of those users look for a local business on a daily basis.

- The majority of consumers **engage with or visit nearby businesses** after conducting a voice search. More than two in five consumers use voice search to ask for directions, an address, or business hours for a nearby location. 88% of consumers<sup>28</sup> are likely to use driving directions after making a voice search.

### What does the future hold for this trend?

---

**AS SPEECH-RECOGNITION ACCURACY GOES FROM 95% TO 99%, WE'LL GO FROM BARELY USING IT TO USING IT ALL THE TIME.**

**ANDREW NG<sup>29</sup>**

(FORMER HEAD OF BAIDU AI GROUP/GOOGLE BRAIN)

---

Wider adoption is obvious, so what does the future hold for voice search? Yes, more people will discover products and even make purchases through voice. That much we already know.

Apart from that, what is the future of voice search for digital marketing?

The future seems more competitive than it is now. While we used to compete for top 10 (or top five) positions in Google, **now we will compete for one.**

Search results are already preparing us for that evolution. It seems that each passing Google algorithm change drives us one tweak closer to providing a single answer to a searcher's query. It's got to be voice search that's driving this.

While written language is more standardized (often influenced by popular queries as via Google auto-suggest results), spoken words are much less predictable.

We all speak in slightly different ways. **Search queries will become more diverse** which means less competition -- provided you find effective ways to cater to that keyword diversity.

## What should we be doing?

Most voice search users search for local-based queries. So the first step is **get your local listing in order**, i.e. keep it clean and updated. Various services offer listings management, including Yext, Moz, and Chatmeter. Monitor media and reviews that are added by your customers and engage with them quickly.

**If you're not #1, then you're not seen at all:** Only one result is currently served to consumers when they search via voice. This means you need to set up a thorough keyword research and analysis strategy:

- **Overall invest more time in keyword research tools.** This includes researching niche

questions on forums, tracking keyword context in real-time on Twitter, taking notes from phone calls with customers, etc. Every department in your company should contribute to your keyword research efforts. The more you know **how people tend to speak when discussing your products**, the better.

- **Optimize for non-branded queries:** More than two-thirds<sup>30</sup> of impressions on local searches come from "discovery" or non-branded searches. Successful "Voice Engine Optimization" (VEO) reaches consumers who know what they want but not where they want it from.
- **Get optimized for featured snippets:** Embrace good old long tail keyword search:

Optimize for long tail queries because they are more likely to trigger featured snippets.

**Optimize for questions:**

Add product Q&A and FAQ sections on your website. Answers to these questions provide easy content for search engines when faced with other searches asking the same questions.

- **Participate in Google's projects such as Google Speakable.** This project enables you to add your own audio to be read in response for a voice query.



# MACHINE LEARNING



## Why is this a trend?

While AI is about teaching a machine to act like a human being, machine learning provides marketers with enhanced **insight into collected data to act upon.**

Machine learning solutions help aggregate and understand complicated data, qualify sales, predict future ROI, better predict ideal customer profiles, and come up with a competitive advantage.

Machine learning-based marketing platforms can help define more competitive, contextually relevant pricing as well as predict the effectiveness of upselling strategies.

One example of businesses using machine learning is Facebook's DeepText<sup>31</sup>, a deep learning-based text analysis engine. It can understand with "near-human accuracy" the text-based content of several thousand posts per second in more than 20 languages.

---

*"DeepText is used by the AML Conversation Understanding team to get a better understanding of when someone might want to go somewhere. It's used for intent detection, which helps realize that a person is not looking for a taxi when he or she says something like, "I just came out of the taxi," as opposed to "I need a ride."*

## What does the future hold for this trend?

The future of machine learning is one the biggest -- and most complicated -- topics in data and analytics.

Overall, machine learning presents an enormous opportunity for the marketing industry. From eliminating the need for employees to do

mechanical tasks (e.g. data preparation) to advanced data analysis, machine learning is fundamentally changing strategic marketing. The demand for machine learning marketing solutions will result in the growing popularity of Machine-Learning-as-a-Service (MLaaS) platforms (which is the future of SaaS business models as we know it). These platforms will integrate machine learning into any business without having to invest in in-house technology.

Machine learning will improve search and product discoverability by introducing more advanced emotion detection as well as facial, speech, and visual recognition.

Ultimately, machine learning will power advanced IoT analysis.

Machine learning makes it possible to take all the fragmented data from various devices together to discover hidden patterns, create individual customer profiles, and set up advanced personalized experiences.

In the end, the user won't have to do anything except consume the product.

## What should we be doing?

Machine learning is already being integrated into several powerful marketing solutions.

The marketer's task now is to choose which platform(s) to use to access data and analysis at this earlier stage:

### **Invest in Facebook Ads (to start collecting and analyzing that data now).**


One of the most obvious examples of machine learning solutions in marketing that are available now, for just about any business, big or small, is the Facebook Advertising platform. This platform uses both machine learning (i.e. DeepText) and AI to serve its users what they really need at the most suitable moment. Being a Facebook advertiser is the easiest way to leverage machine learning-empowered marketing on a doable budget.

### **Use advanced sentiment analysis platforms.**

Another area where machine learning is becoming widely integrated is online sentiment analysis (also known as opinion mining). Sentiment analysis platforms that use machine learning empower marketers to come up with better products and to spot an upcoming reputation crisis before it happens.

### **Use machine learning for lead verification.**

Machine learning has already changed the sales process. For example, Salesforce's self-learning algorithm<sup>32</sup> delivers "predictions and recommendations based on your unique business processes and customer data." The algorithm scores every lead showing whether the contact is likely to respond to your pitch, in turn making your lead nurturing process much more productive.



# Personalization



## Why is this a trend?

Now more than ever, marketers have access to enormous amounts of data. Thanks to machine learning and AI solutions, data analysis allows marketers to use that data to personalize the buyer's journey throughout the whole conversion channel.

The more channels we use, the more data we collect. This includes in-store and web behavior, email engagement, customer demographics, geographic location, device usage, customer surveys, social media monitoring, etc.

Using all of these channels allows us to develop a genuinely **customer-centric focus**, providing tailored, cross-channel, consistent, and connected experiences.

Big players are already using advanced personalization to sell more and build customer loyalty.

For example, Starbucks incorporates omnichannel strategies in personalization campaigns. They use their mobile app to personalize customers' app experiences based on in-store purchases and location.

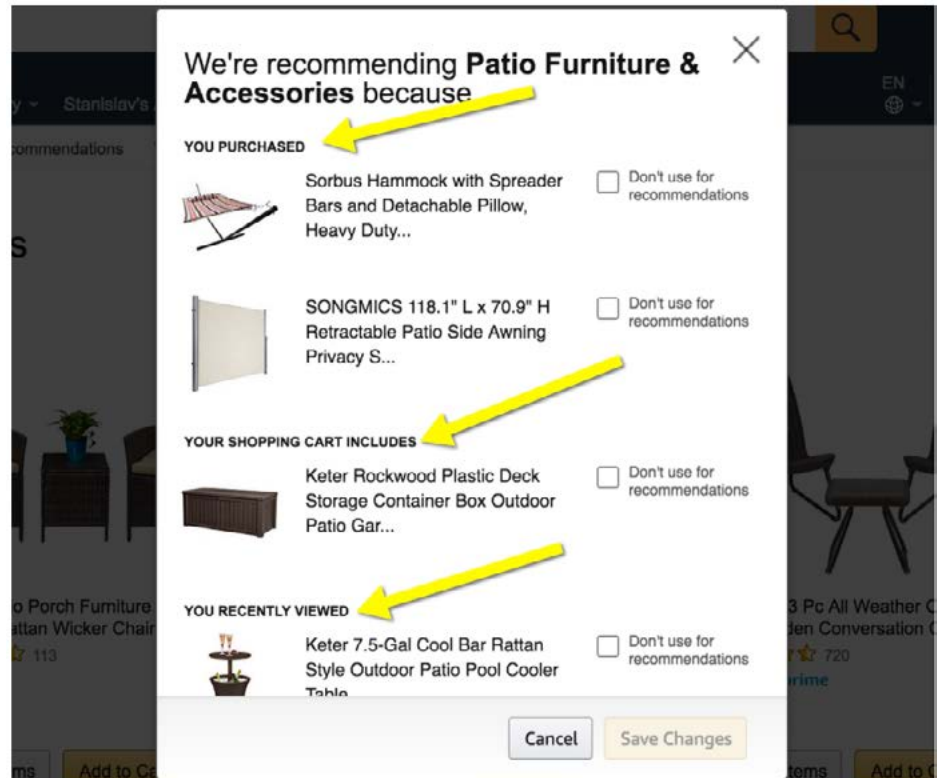
Thread is another innovative brand that uses AI-powered advanced personalization<sup>33</sup> to serve better fashion recommendations for each customer. Their algorithm learns each customer's style and then suggests clothing that either "broadens" their horizons, or helps them find things they know they like.

Advanced personalization is not just for ecommerce. It is finding its way into educational approaches too. Sesame Street's<sup>34</sup> AI-driven vocabulary learning app observes a child's vocabulary and reading level and then uses that data to recommend personalized learning exercises for each particular user.

Another aforementioned example is, of course, Amazon. More and more, brand and product discovery

is influenced by Amazon's AI algorithm that takes into account past shopping history as well as items in Wishlists, items left in shopping carts, and even customers reviews.<sup>35</sup>

they wished their shopping experience was **far more personalized** than it was.



Big players' adoption means that customers almost **expect the same level of personalization** whenever they interact with any brand online:

- In a survey by Infosys<sup>36</sup>, 31% of surveyed consumers said
- In 2016, Salesforce<sup>37</sup> found that close to 60% of consumers were willing to share their personal data in exchange for a personalized shopping experience. Moreover, most of the surveyed consumers revealed



that they expected brands to send them personalized offers based on their past purchasing decisions.

Personalized marketing is what customers may be expecting from you and is no longer a matter of choice. Research conducted by Segment<sup>38</sup> in 2017 offers more insight into buyers' growing demand for advanced personalization as well as the real power of it:

- More than 40% of surveyed consumers said that they were likely to buy again thanks to a personalized shopping experience.
- 40% of surveyed consumers said they had purchased something more expensive than they originally intended thanks to the personalized experience.

- Thanks to receiving a personalized product recommendation, almost half of the surveyed consumers said they had purchased a product **they did not originally plan to purchase.**

Personalization in marketing generates more sales, builds customer loyalty, and drives impulse shopping.

While personalization is believed to be one of the fastest-growing marketing trends, it is often misunderstood. Personalization is not about categorization (something marketers have been doing for ages). It's not creating buyer personas or segmenting your email list.

In other words, personalized marketing is serving custom content or a special offer to an individual rather than to an identified group of individuals. This also means that true personalization is unthinkable without embracing AI technology.

### What does the future hold for this trend?

Growing privacy concerns are not going to kill marketing personalization. Rather, they will force it to evolve.

With privacy regulations being introduced, there's a growing need for brands to get transparent as to how they use customers' data for personalization purposes. Being transparent is a must.

CATEGORIZATION	PERSONALIZATION
Marketing to a <b>group</b> of customers	Targeting each <b>specific</b> customer
<b>Example:</b> Sending six different emails to six different audience segments	<b>Example:</b> Sending a uniquely generated email to each specific subscriber based on his/her past engagements with the site

You don't "own" personal data just because a user agreed to buy something from you or registered at your site. It's a bargain -- you need to provide value in return.

Consumers are usually willing to give companies their personal information as long as they see value in it for them (e.g. tailored experiences, ability to customize products, and personalized deals).

**Real-time personalization** (i.e. data-driven personalization completed in less than one second) is another fast-growing trend powered by machine learning and AI. Imagine your site changing in real time based on how a user is interacting with it.

Again, the future of marketing personalization is being able to give your users what they need even before they know they need it.

## What should we be doing?

While the demand for personalization is growing,

most brands are still falling<sup>39</sup> behind, relying on mostly basic personalization tactics and failing to engage consumers.

Poor adoption can be explained by misconception of the trend.

Small businesses fail to embrace personalized marketing because they assume it requires huge investments and/or in-house development.

But in reality, personalization can be embraced through existing and growing third-party solutions -- without the need to invest in in-house technology.

Here are four possible personalization techniques you can adopt now, that require no in-house technology:

**Create personalized experiences for returning customers.** Specifically, target your on-site call-to-actions to each returning user. There are a few powerful ecommerce solutions that allow this functionality.

**Embrace advanced advertising** using Google and Facebook ads.

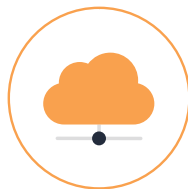
**Create dynamic email recommendations** based on past engagement experiences, such as an ebook downloaded, a link clicked, etc. There are a few email automation platforms available now that can handle these personalized email campaigns for you.

**Set up "on-request content" channels** to deliver content automatically when requested through chatbots. As mentioned, there are currently a few powerful solutions that allow you to create smart, self-learning chatbots using straightforward visual editors.

Overall, find a personalization technology partner that is best for your brand. Luckily, we have quite a few powerful players in this sector already.

# Honorable mentions

---



## Automation

Marketing as a whole has become drastically more complex: Omnichannel marketing, global marketing, multi-location marketing, lead verification, serving personalized + dynamic content, real-time marketing, etc.

Many digital marketing tasks are now impossible without automation, such as keeping track of multiple local business listings or monitoring social media sentiment.

- The US Marketing Automation Software industry was a \$3.3B market in 2017<sup>40</sup> and **growing 30%+ annually**.
- Marketing automation can boost sales productivity by ~15%<sup>41</sup>.
- 63% of marketers<sup>42</sup> planned to increase their marketing automation budgets in 2018.

Chatmeter's Workflow<sup>43</sup> tool is a great example of a meaningful automation that helps your team accomplish and focus on what matters. It helps you set up automatic alerts, prioritization, and user roles to respond to reviews and get notified of a deleted local listing in a timely manner.



## Google algorithm updates

Google algorithm updates are also getting far more challenging. Major Google updates (e.g. Panda and Penguin) are now integrated into the core algorithm, which makes them harder to diagnose as they are never officially confirmed anymore.

You can use tools such as Mozcast<sup>44</sup> and Accuranker<sup>45</sup>, and subscribe to SEOrountable<sup>46</sup> to spot unusual search engine

position movements. From there, you should follow any effects on your own site analytics.

Google does several core updates per year<sup>47</sup>. For 2018 the major "core" updates were the Relevancy Update and Google Medic update<sup>48</sup>. For those and other (unconfirmed) "core" updates, the reported fix is the same: Better, longer content, E-A-T<sup>50</sup>, and smarter internal linking. There are **no longer any "shortcuts"** to fixing a drop in Google positions.

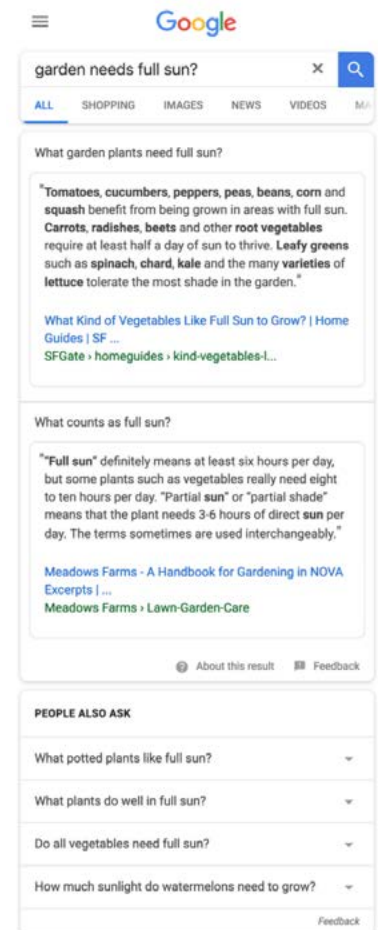
More notable 2018 Google updates:

**Mobile-first indexing update** changing the focus from desktop to mobile. From now on<sup>51</sup>, Google uses the mobile version of the page **as the starting point** for indexing and ranking. There's said to be no ranking benefit for those with mobile-friendly websites, but rather the mobile version of your website is now the **primary version**. Keeping it up-to-date and complete becomes a priority, as much as you'd previously prioritize your desktop site.

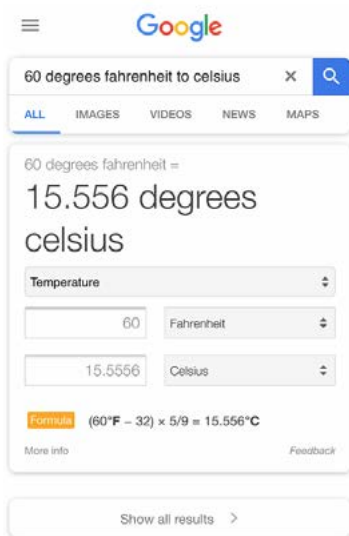
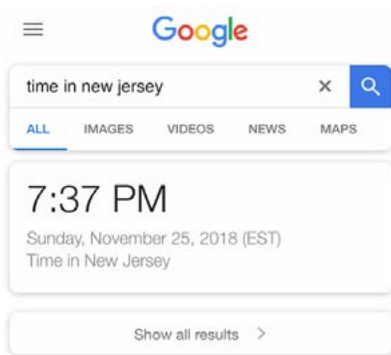
**"Mandatory" https** update forcing publishers to enable SSL certificates for their sites.

There are also major SERP layout updates that impact referral traffic. In 2018 these were:

Multifaceted featured snippets, i.e. Google showing several consequent answers to a single query. These show up mostly on mobile devices: Example<sup>52</sup> :



“Serpless SERPs” (also known as “Zero-Result SERPs”), i.e. search results pages that show nothing but an answer box. These show up in searches related to time, conversions, and math. Here are a few examples.<sup>53</sup>



On average, Google changes their algorithm 500-600 times each year. Using a tool such as Chatmeter helps businesses to monitor, track,

and make adjustments to their Google listings for every location. We monitor each and every update to Google Maps and other local listing directories -- so you don't have to.



### Optimizing for SEO

Search remains the most effective online traffic and visibility source, and it's not going to change anytime soon. Having a Google presence is not really an option. If a business is not on Google, it does not exist:

- There are 3.6 billion searches daily<sup>54</sup> on Google, which equates to 1.2 trillion searches per year worldwide.
- 85% of customers<sup>55</sup> use the internet to research before making a purchase.

Google is still where many buying journeys start. It's also where most reputation checks are conducted before consumers have enough trust in a brand to buy from it. Whether it's text or voice search, SEO is still the only way to get your product discovered through search.

# Conclusion



**Digital marketing is predicted to enter the next period of disruption soon.**

The previous one (named “Marketing 2.0”) happened in the early 2010s, when marketing became all about communication and interaction with customers.

This new disruption is driven by new technologies and, consequently, new customers’ expectations. It’s time for businesses to prepare for the next evolution in digital marketing.

The consumer is becoming much more informed and demanding.

As technology advances, so do consumers’ expectations. Those expectations include **immediate** meaningful interaction with the brand at any given moment and a **highly personalized** experience with the site.

Businesses need to prepare themselves for **“on-demand” consumers** -- people who know what they want and want it **now**.



It's no longer all about reaching the customer through advertising or organic search. It's also about tying them to your brand through personalized experience and continuous interaction (through building on-demand content channels).

In order to accommodate new technology, businesses need to build a cohesive marketing technology stack. The good news is, marketing technology is advancing quickly to meet the demand for smarter, more integrated, cross-platform, and machine learning-enhanced marketing software.

These days, marketers have a wide variety of advanced marketing applications to choose from. You can find technology around advanced content development, lead nurturing, smart and increasingly independent chatbots, enhanced dynamic personalization software, and more.

Furthermore, marketers must ensure their business presence on Google, Amazon, and major social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn) in order to stay competitive. Being there means both ensuring your product discoverability and having access to those

platforms' fast-developing technology and data.

The old marketing adage "Content is King" is still going to be true in the new marketing strategy. Consumers are still driven by their thirst for content.

But technology is changing the ways content is delivered. Just a few years ago, creating video and visual content was quite enough to engage a customer. But these days, consumers want virtual and augmented reality, personalized content experiences, and content that can serve their immediate need.

The web is getting faster and engaging the customer more challenging. The answer lies in building a cross-platform presence and using aggregated data from all the channels for advanced analysis capabilities.

Marketers need to be always thinking, learning, and testing new software and new tactics. The future may be challenging for smaller businesses. But where there is a challenge, there's also an opportunity for forward-thinking flexible businesses that are eager to innovate.

