6 Technologies That Will Reshape Marketing In The Next Decade

Augmented reality and the Internet of Things are among the defining forces going forward.

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When the internet was beginning to be commercially adopted in the early 1990s, few predicted how it would completely overhaul the marketing industry over the next two decades. Ingenious search engines that navigate a plethora of budding websites, along with the first online display and search ads, marked a drastic turn of marketing dynamics as individuals's active search behavior allowed for much more relevant and efficient ad delivery.

The emergence of social media represented an equally revolutionary milestone, whereby comprehensive data on user demographics, preferences and interests offered marketers unprecedented targeting options. The innovation of advertising is the foundation on which world-changing tech giants such as Google or Facebook are built upon. It has allowed them to claim a huge chunk of all ad spending and generate revenues surpassing the total GDPs of entire countries.

In a similar fashion, companies that manage to formulate the most scalable marketing ecosystems around the next wave of society-altering technology, coupling commercial with consumption intent more effectively, will experience

astronomic growth and most likely become corporate superpowers – or further cement their dominance.

Early adopters who leverage those novel tools and unsaturated channels will gain significant competitive advantages, and new companies and agencies will emerge that build out their own tools or business models to complement the most impactful future marketing technologies.

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Big Data, AI and Quantum Computing

Why are these three buzzwords seemingly just lumped together? Because their development is strongly interdependent, and combined they'll underpin most major technology advancements. The synergy of AI and big data is already deeply rooted in the core marketing activities of both large and small digital enterprises: Recommendation engines account for a staggering 35 percent of Amazon's total sales, multi-channel sentiment analysis informs the brand strategies of companies like Samsung, and every minor e-commerce retailer can already harness the effectiveness of chatbots.

AI thrives on mountains of information to fuel its continuous learning mechanisms, and once leveraged by the mind-bending processing speeds of quantum computers to tap ever-increasing sources of big data, its capacity to deliver unique insights, automate a multitude of tasks and even take over various decision-making aspects from humans will surge exponentially.

The likes of IBM, D-Wave and Microsoft are all investing heavily into quantum computing, and Google has already modelled quantum neural networks in a race to build the first stable and commercially viable quantum computer, a force of (artificial) nature that would enable the conception of a sheer endless number of potential AI-powered applications, some which we haven't even imagined yet.

It’s safe to assume that the first commercial applications to emerge from the current research will serve the core functions of the companies at the forefront of their development. As a result, all pillars of online marketing – SEO, digital advertising, price matching etc. – will be subject to massive disruptions as they become more efficient and autonomous.

It also means many jobs will become obsolete. Various custom services provided by agencies, especially in the realm of data analytics, will inevitably become commoditized through respective AI tools. The cannibalization will even spill over to the more creative marketing segments, given algorithms that autonomously generate personalized assets, copies and content exist already.

The technological leap driven by the development of the holy technological trinity of big data, AI and quantum computing will open a treasure chest of unprecedented opportunities for online marketers in the form of novel applications to reach and monetize customers as well as an enhancement of the current digital marketing ecosystems. Equally, those who fail to adapt will find themselves overhauled by the progress.

Internet of Things

As of now, our smartphones, laptops and some commercial machines and sensors comprise the majority of the current gateways to the internet. However, this is rapidly changing as the physical and digital realms increasingly (and somewhat frighteningly) converge. An estimated 41.6 billion Internet of Things (IoT) devices will generating 79.4 zettabytes of data by 2025; a truly astronomical figure brimming with potential.

Beacon technology, 5G, sophisticated sensors, self-driving cars, smart wearables and smart homes all just mark the beginning of a world where almost anything powered by electricity may be connected to each other and with the all-encompassing web, opening up deep-reaching tracking and

engagement opportunities for marketers.

CTRs of almost 100 percent will no longer be an impossibility, whereby companies and agencies shall strive for hyper relevance and aim to eliminate the interruptive commercial based on demographic and behavioral data from a limited few devices. Fridges, vending machines, shop displays, even plates; every ”thing” may serve as a touchpoint to accompany the consumer along a much richer, attributable and predictable journey in the quest to serve the right sales message at the right time.

To fully realize the potential, marketers will face the monumental technical challenge of implementing holistic, multi-device platforms that can assimilate and manage all these incredibly varied and intertwined gadgets and their associated data. Undoubtedly, this will give birth to many new entrants that take it upon themselves to deliver solutions for a new, hyperconnected cosmos.

Voice and Virtual Assistants

A promising child of AI harnesses one of the most ancient forms of human interaction: voice. The likes of Alexa, Siri or Google Assistant are slowly morphing into a ubiquitous and most seamless UI that will change the way we find information, consume media and buy things.

With 61 million people owning a digital assistant in the US alone and already 20 percent of all mobile searches being conducted orally, the value of including voice search in future marketing strategies is clear. Add to that moves like Google’s plans to integrate voice query data into the Search Console and roll out Google Actions, software that allows Google Assistant to interact with a site’s content, and the consideration of virtual assistants will no longer be advisable but instead become a must.

Businesses are already reaping the rewards of proper voice search optimization and attain significant boosts to their click-through and conversion rates, attributable to greater relevance and less competition on voice search result pages. Measures such as ensuring localized businesses are listed in the assistant-favored data-aggregators, or optimizing for semantics- – with a greater focus on conversational interrogative phrases – are already in the standard repertoire of forward-thinking SEO tools and agencies.

However, the new frontier revealed by virtual assistants lies beyond search. Cross-app integration and deeper access to big data are the first steps to transform them from mere search enhancers into predictors of users's needs capable of autonomously serving highly targeted ads and carry out transactions on their behalf. In that light, it becomes self-evident that the proliferating number of IoT devices comprise the perfect ecosystem for virtual assistants to link up with. Alexa's integration into newer BMW cars and into various Bosch home appliances pose examples that hint towards a future where VAs serve as a point of convergence for multi-device data on user's behaviors and preferences and as the agent to deliver hyper-relevant ads at the right moment.

Right now, marketers should recognize the importance of voice search in SEO. In the future, once IoT becomes omnipresent, a whole new world opens up in which marketers can devise entirely new ways to reach consumers, leveraging stronger emotional connections enabled through voice and tapping into gargantuan reserves of big data.

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Augmented Reality

A scene from the Netflix series *Altered Carbon* presents what an augmented/mixed-reality urban landscape could look like: The main character walks along the alleys of a futuristic

city, and through high-tech contact lenses sees a myriad of flashy holograms promoting mostly dubious amenities. In 2019, overlaying augmented reality through such lenses still belongs to the realm of sci-fi movies (for now). Instead, smartphones are still the marketer’s AR gateway to the consumer, and an increasingly effective one at that.

Various e-commerce niches in particular may see significant boosts in sales as the online shoppers’s hesitation is alleviated by being able to more vividly visualize the products with their smartphone from the comforts of their homes. For example, IKEA’s Place app, developed with Apple’s ARKit, allows thousands of pieces of furniture to be virtually previewed anywhere in a roomm, causing the likelihood of buying to increase 11-fold. It’s quite possible that, for some industries, offering visualizations to “try out” products pre-sale will transition from being a mere value-adding gimmick to a standard consumer expectation.

Similarly, AR is set to play a huge role in enhancing the physical shopping experience of retail stores. More engaging shop displays, like Zara’s virtual catwalk that replaced mannequins in one of its stores, allow brands to make stronger emotional connections through interaction. Walmart enhanced its mobile app with an AR scanner, allowing the product-conscious customer to easily retrieve an item’s reviews or additional information.

Most interesting for online marketing agencies, however, is the dawn of AR ads on social-media platforms. Earlier this year, Snap Inc. opened up programmatic auctions for AR Lenses to the masses, and by rolling out the complementary Lens Studio, agencies possess an additional format to offer to clients that’s more compelling than video. Facebook, too, tested AR ads in its Newsfeeds and Messenger, resulting in companies like WakeMeUp, who let customers try on new shades of makeup, to boast a sales uplift of 27.6 percent.

Furthermore, as tech behemoths open up the technology for audiences to engage with the real world through AR on a daily basis, it won’t be long for shops and amenities in proximity to promote themselves on those overlaid screens, effectively positioned between physical billboards or signs and Google Maps entries.

Considering AR interaction is especially appealing to younger demographics and that the number of mobile AR devices could exceed 2.5 billion by 2023, it’s no wonder that the next decade and beyond will see AR ads shift from the domain of early adopters to the mainstream.

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