

# The Top 10 Customer Engagement Trends That Will Define 2016

Source, Forbes, November 2015

If relevance, context, and effective delivery aren't the topic of regular conversations in your marketing department, 2016 is going to be a frustrating year for you.

Businesses need to keep a clear focus on the needs and expectations of their customers – a group that's diverse and fragmented, with high expectations and little patience for anyone who can't keep up. To stay competitive you need to be visible, and that's no easy feat.

Which marketing trends should you be prepared to follow? Here's a look at the 10 customer engagement trends that will drive conversations and conversions in 2016.

## 1. Embrace the Customer Experience Model



It's been a slow grind for some, but marketing departments are moving from a silo of advertising and non-interactive communication toward becoming a natural part of the sales cycle and an extension of customer service. Marketers, using integrated tools, can engage with customers online, track the buyer's journey, measure sentiment and loyalty, and match behavior with outreach tailored to meet their audience's needs and interests.

But for customers already bombarded with information, a great customer experience is becoming baseline. The year 2016 will see brand ambassadors given a higher priority, more effective customer engagement—using tactics highlighted below—and tighter collaboration with sales and support to directly affect conversion rates.

*Forbes, November 2015*

## ■ 2. Will Ad Blockers Change the Game?

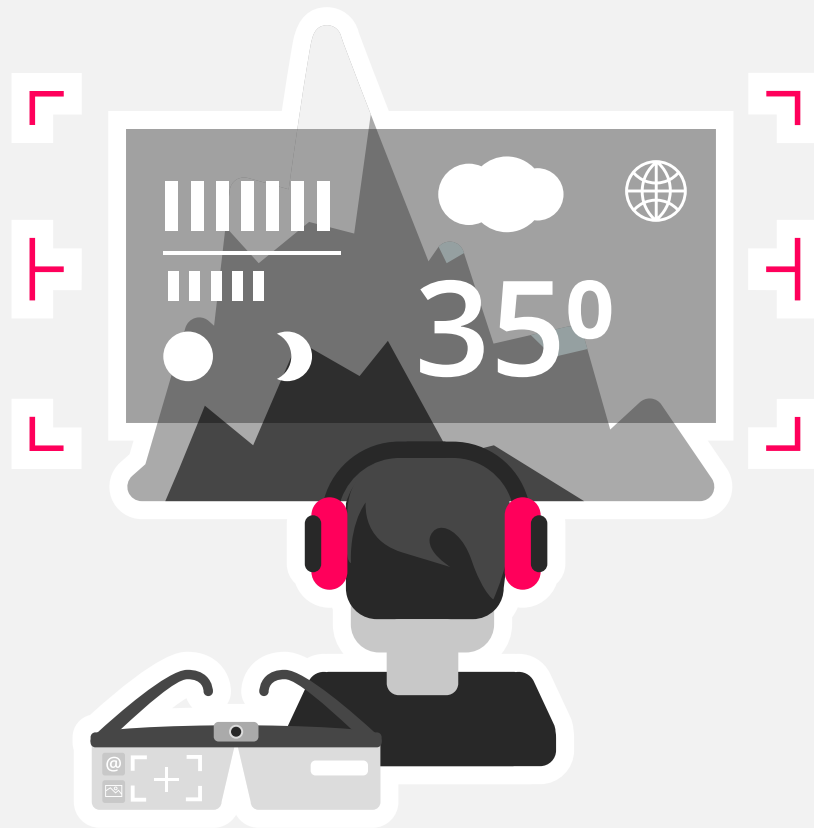


Consumers are sick of in-your-face marketing. As marketers and builders engage in a healthy debate about the presence of ad blockers, the truth is that if advertising isn't relevant it's annoying – and consumers have little patience for anything annoying. How can a good brand get noticed?

Watch for companies to continue to create advertisements that seamlessly blend with—rather than interrupt—the browsing experience, as well as to use those customer-centric insights to drive content and social engagement.

*Forbes, November 2015*

### ■ 3. Dream and Market in 3D



Virtual reality literally drops people inside their favorite TV show, provides an on-the-ground preview of their next vacation, or puts them behind the wheel of their next car. Customer experience is priority number one and—although it's still evolving—3D technology is poised to move from novelty to mainstream.

It will start most heavily in the gaming industry, but as the technology to create and consume becomes more accessible, smart marketers will look for ways to bring their products to virtual life.

*Forbes, November 2015*

## 4. Social Media as a Channel

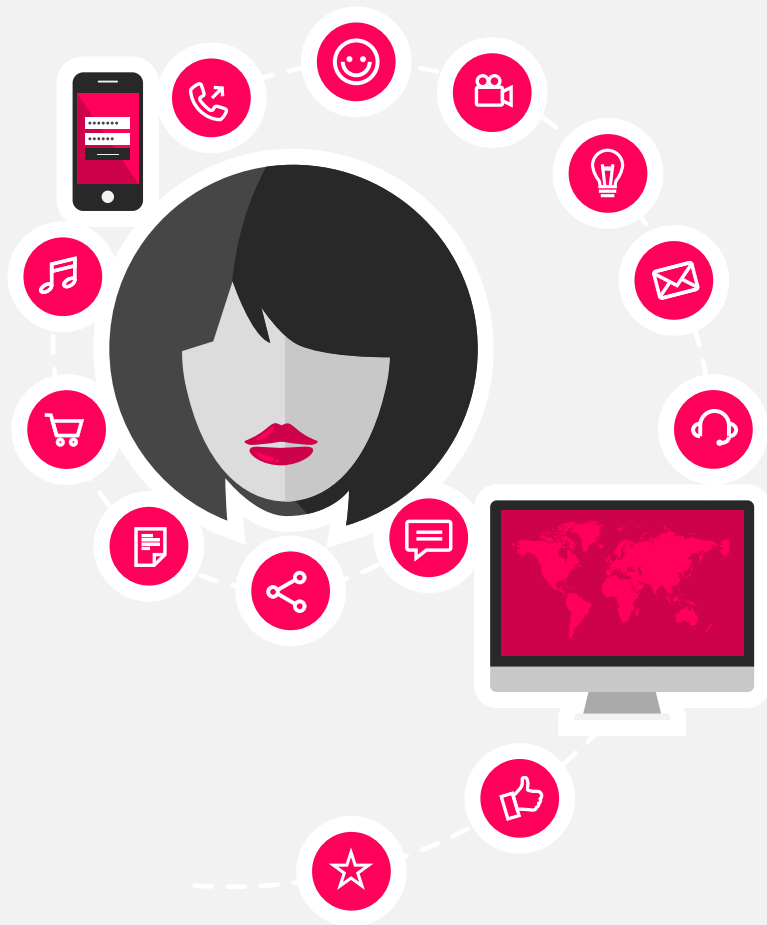


Marketers will (finally) recognize social media as a channel, not a strategy. Social media isn't marketing, and it doesn't work as a "strategy" on its own—something that seems to have finally sunk into the collective marketing consciousness.

Social media is one platform of many, a tactic that does a great job of supporting broad campaigns but flounders by itself. This distinction will shape marketing strategies and budgetary considerations in 2016.

*Forbes, November 2015*

## 5. Omnichannel Will be Retail's Best Friend



Tweet for Pizza! Dominos has one of the catchiest omnichannel campaigns right now, but brands across the board will quickly learn that an integrated customer experience is essential—one that creates one smooth interaction, rather than multiple micro events.

From addressing the causes behind abandoned shopping carts to creating an easy transition between online and bricks-and-mortar locations, omnichannel will improve the bottom line for both retailers and B2B.

*Forbes, November 2015*

## ■ 6. Big Data IS for Marketers

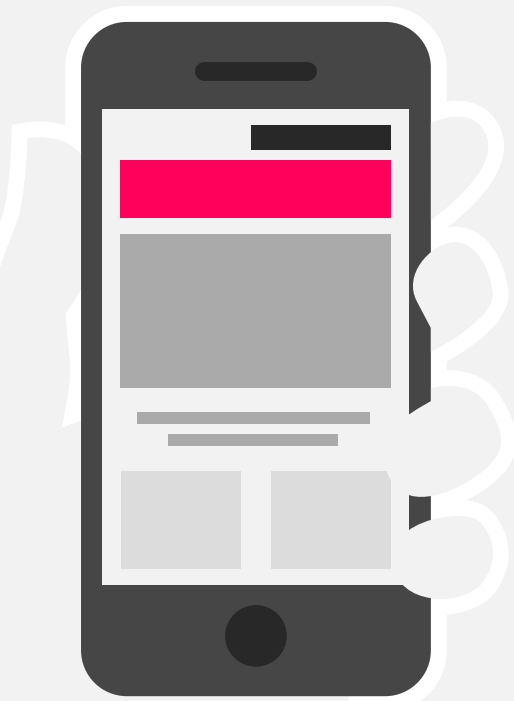


Big data, which includes social and unstructured data, is a goldmine for marketers. Until recently, many marketers shied away from big data because they lacked the skills—or the big budget resources—to translate it into something meaningful.

Now, tools are coming to the marketplace that make mining and managing data easier than ever. 2016 will be a banner year for incorporating big data and perhaps more importantly, analytics into marketing decisions.

*Forbes, November 2015*

## 7. Mobile, Mobile, Mobile

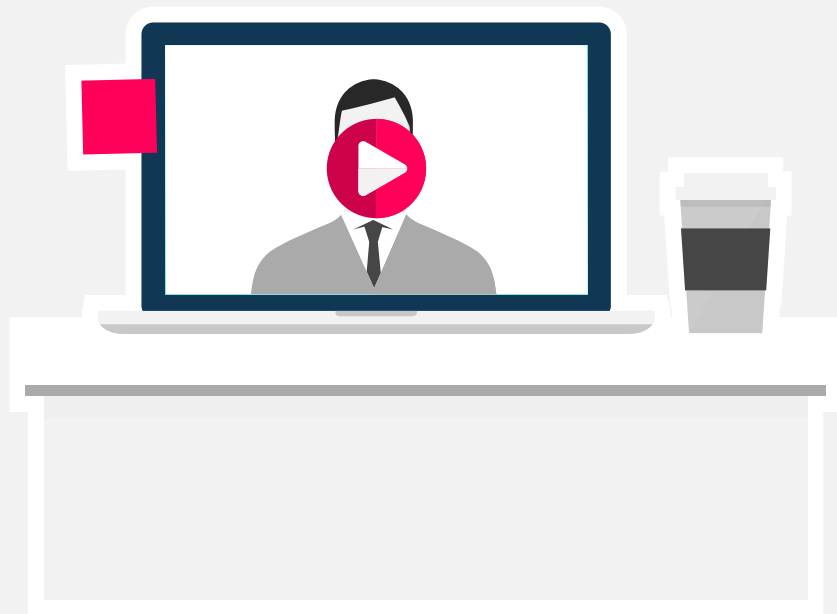


Marketers who've been lazy about pursuing mobile are about to miss the train altogether; the number of people who do their browsing on devices passed desktop users a while ago. For retailers, mobile is basic; for others, it soon will be.

At a minimum, this means a mobile-optimized and responsive website, and may include custom apps and mobile-targeted campaigns. The frontrunners have already moved on to other things; mobile can't be put off for another year.

*Forbes, November 2015*

## 8. Video Use Explodes While Live Streaming Finds a Purpose

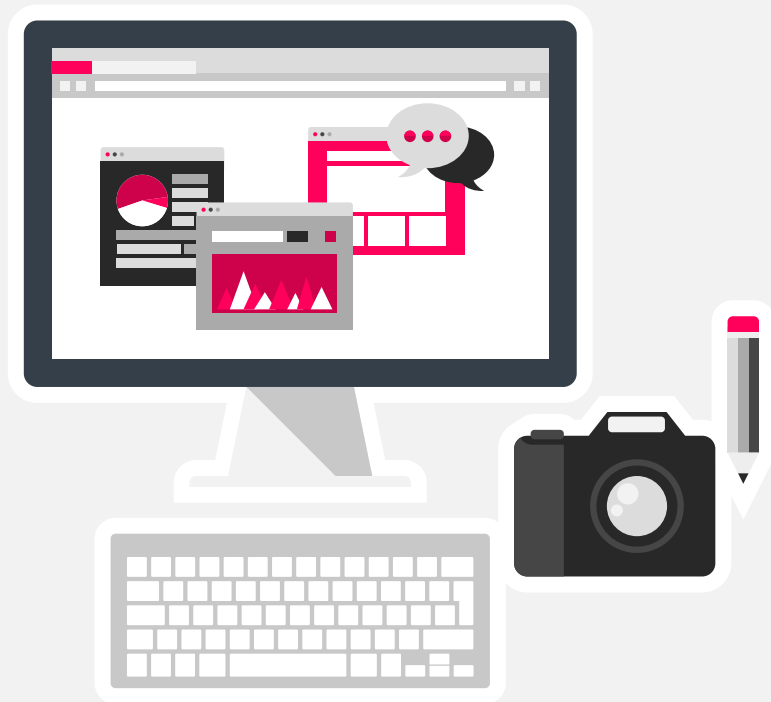


If you want to engage with millennials, video is a must-have marketing tactic; they prefer to find entertainment and education on YouTube over conventional channels like television. Snapchat, YouTube, gifs, Vine, and more are being consumed at a rapid rate. Streaming video takes this to the next level, and platforms like Periscope and Blab have put interactive live video into the hands of anyone with a smartphone.

The next year will see video continue to shine and streaming move to the forefront of marketing, with innovative new campaigns that allow consumers to be the stars.

*Forbes, November 2015*

## 9. No Rest for Content

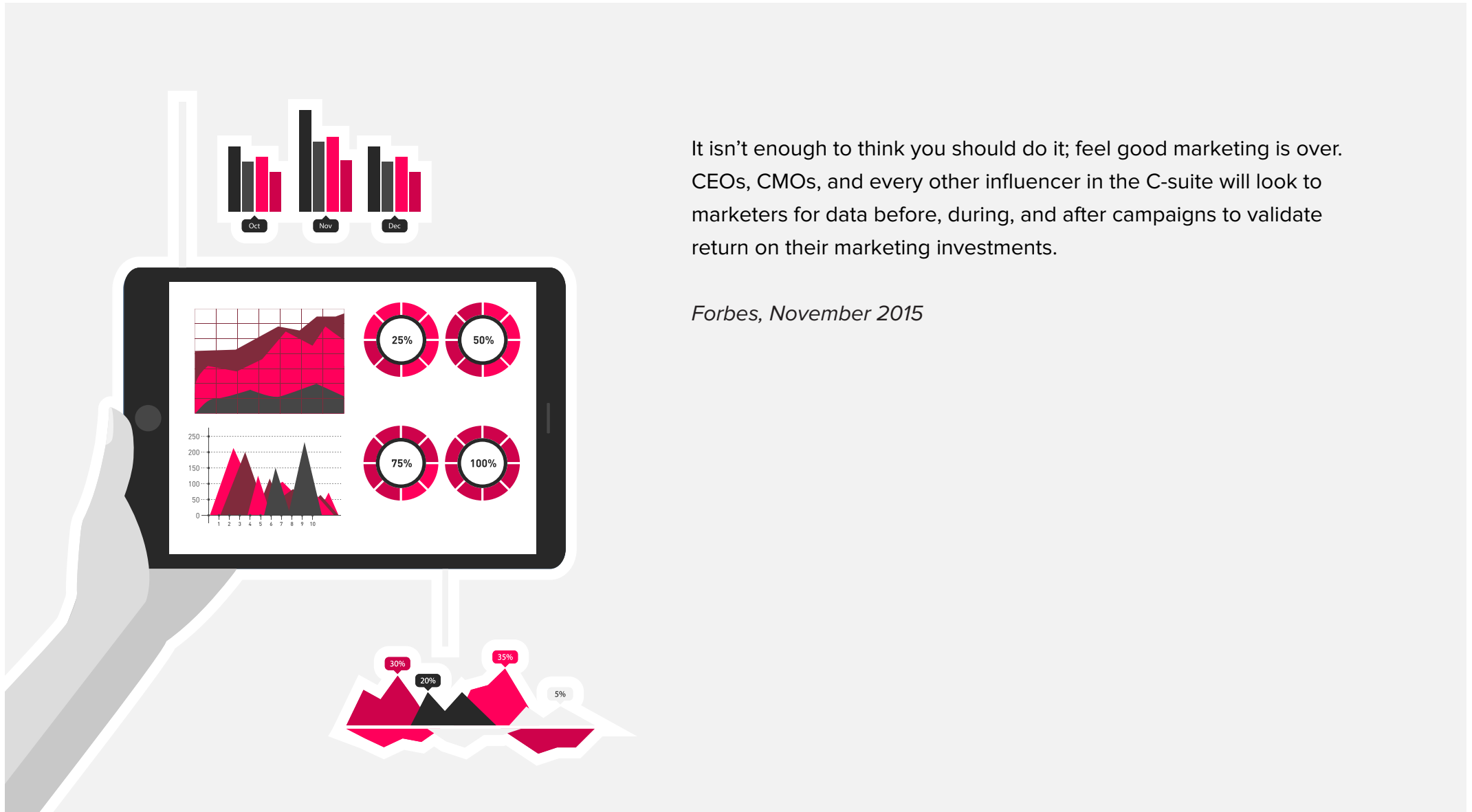


It may sound like a broken record, but content is still king—even more so given the deterioration of interruptive tactics. But context is a stronger factor than ever. With no decline in sight for the importance of good content, the next year will see greater focus on bringing influencers on board for more organic marketing.

Storytelling will also play a key role in drawing consumers in and keeping them engaged. Natural, relevant content in the right channels will drive content campaigns.

*Forbes, November 2015*

## 10. Data Will Be an Overarching Theme



It isn't enough to think you should do it; feel good marketing is over. CEOs, CMOs, and every other influencer in the C-suite will look to marketers for data before, during, and after campaigns to validate return on their marketing investments.

*Forbes, November 2015*