

Five trends likely to lead digital agencies in 2018

By [Bradley Elliott](#)

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According to Forrester's 2017 Customer Experience (CX) Index, 30% of companies will see declines in the quality of their customer experience performance in 2018, placing their businesses at risk.



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The report explains that customer expectations will outpace companies' ability to evolve or invent experiences. This slow pace of transformation means companies can't adjust fast enough or well enough.

The smart executives will be the ones to take proactive steps in turning their customer experience platforms into portals for truly compelling and meaningful engagements with customers.

As digital agencies and consultancies seek to gain distinction over competitors, the following five trends will drive the development of digital in 2018:

1. Data will fall

South Africa has some of the highest data tariffs in the world, restricting access to cutting-edge applications at work and home. Due to pressure by #datamustfall campaigners, network operators have begun the long-overdue process of drastically cutting data prices, granting easier access to broadband Internet to South Africans, particularly the youth.

2. The rise of online video

As data prices decline, video content is becoming an increasingly dominant part of the Internet, with video making up 74% of all Internet traffic in 2017, according to a recent report. This is set to increase further, with brands investing more on video across their functional divisions.

3. Marrying tech with creativity

As marketing and core business functionality become increasingly intertwined, companies are breaking down the silos that separate their various divisions. Creative agencies and tech consultancies alike will need to offer integrated digital platforms with a range of applications, including admin, logistics and marketing. The various tools will be integrated into a single

experience that takes the user seamlessly from the initial moment of gaining awareness about a brand or offer to place an order, tracking it, delivery, and after-sales service and monitoring.

4. The technology revolution – IoT, AI and robotics

- Big data analytics will become a vital input into marketing efforts and key business decisions, enabling the offering of targeted and personalised offers to customers through preferred channels. Automated artificial intelligence (AI) systems will allow much better precision and accuracy, improving click-through-rates and sales.
- Feeding in the Internet of Things (IoT), the online world will extend further into urban planning through Smart City technology that connects public infrastructure such as traffic lights with smart devices such as vehicles and mobile phones. Already gaining momentum are location-based social platforms like traffic and navigation app Waze, which offers motorists the easiest and fastest routes to their destinations. At home, devices such as the Amazon Echo smart speaker, a voice-controlled intelligent personal assistant, offer a wide range of weather, radio, music streaming, shopping and general search services, offering deeper and richer connectivity to the online world.
- Using AI, robotics will take on increasingly complex tasks, such as online retail delivery using drones, autonomous transport and hi-tech assembly and maintenance.

5. Real influencers

The flooded world of social media calls for brands to demand more out of their influencer programmes than just well-known faces. AI technology such as Continuum can identify the most active individuals who drive the conversation around a brand on social media. While not as famous as celebrity influencers, they are authentic in their engagement and effective in their ability to drive a meaningful campaign.

A host of new channels, devices and technologies are set to enter the market in 2018, however, the overall trend is towards more personalised and meaningful engagements that recognise a long-term relationship between a brand and its customers and employees.

Using these tools and trends, digital marketers and tech consultants will be able to stay on the cutting edge at each step of evolution. Advanced technology will be meaningless without the intention of creating a world that enables the lives of consumers rather than clutters them.

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