



# SOCIAL TRENDS 2019

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**punch.**

In the fast-spinning world of social, sitting still isn't an option. Some trends burn bright - then quickly fade away. Others go the distance, changing how we connect and communicate for the better. What opportunities will come your way in 2019?



**Bryn Foweather**

Head of Social Media, Punch

# WELCOME

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Here at Punch, innovating around the latest trends is a huge part of what we do - looking out for new opportunities and helping our clients differentiate themselves with bold, original campaigns.

2018 has been an exciting year creatively, with trends like AR and shoppable 360 video taking brand experiences to a whole new level. As new techniques and platforms like TikTok bubble to the surface, what does 2019 have in store?

Let's take a closer look...



# AUGMENTED REALITY

## **AR will overshadow traditional content**

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**As many countries hope to roll out 5G in 2019, we guarantee that a wave of increasingly inventive AR content will sweep across social, replacing traditional content at speed as brands seek to capture the attention of their audience through valuable, immersive experiences.**

AR really hit its stride in 2018, with functionality launched across Facebook Messenger and Instagram Stories, the biggest news came in June when Facebook announced it would be opening its AR Studio to all developers. Now affordable and accessible for brands and influencers of all shapes and sizes, shining in the AR game relies not only on ever more slick and photo-realistic visuals but the ability to offer genuine value for users. AR trigger points are a set to be a huge trend: activating AR experiences on nearby mobile devices.

The perfect link between mobile devices and the experience economy, Tottenham Hotspur is trialling trigger points in its new stadium – letting fans scan the stadium to view scenes on their phones. With AR glasses in development by most tech giants and Facebook rolling out ‘tap to try’ AR ads in its feeds, we are confident in our prediction that AR will be even more important in driving killer brand experiences in 2019.

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AR opens up many possibilities for brands. With the ubiquity of smartphones and as barriers to entry breakdown on various platforms, global brands will be moving towards AR as their preferred choice for creative execution in campaigns.

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David Eglinton, Art Director, Punch



# INSTAGRAM STORIES

## Instagram Stories will eclipse all others in the social space

The ephemeral phenomenon with staying power, 2019 will cement the status of Instagram Stories as a social media strategy cornerstone. From fly-on-the-wall snippets to influencer hints and tips, Stories will evolve to become even more integrated and interactive, empowering brands to engage their followers like never before.

Whether you want to hail an Uber, catch up on Netflix or order dim sum with Deliveroo – in 2019 it's likely that IG Stories will have you covered - expect a whole host of apps and features to be integrated in the same way we've seen with Spotify, SoundCloud and Shazam. Brands across the spectrum are using Stories to reach consumers in new, exciting (and often silly) ways. While the addition of GIFs, Polls, music, AR and animations makes them all the more fun, the real beauty of Stories, like all IG features, is its streamlined user experience. Ad budgets are flowing into Insta, due to the success of Stories - to succeed, brands need to be prepared to throw bags of creativity at this competitive space next year - anyone who's anyone will be using Stories by 2020 (yep, your parents aren't far off).





# SHOPPABLE MEDIA

## Insta-Wallet and the rise of shoppable media

**What if you could spot an influencer wearing an unreal pair of trainers on Instagram, get a closer look and pay in just one tap. We predict 2019 will be the year payments become fully integrated and frictionless with shoppable social – convenience will be key.**

Instagram has further developed the shopping capabilities on its platform by adding the ability to purchase items featured in videos on users' feeds. The social giant will aim to reposition itself as a shopping platform. Next year we will see shoppable content become truly frictionless. With rumours of a standalone Instagram Shopping app in the air, there could be more opportunities for advertisers than ever before.

From sales-focused ephemeral content on Instagram Stories to live streamed product launches, brands must be prepared to test and learn channels and innovative formats to drive sales at their peak. The sad state of the UK's High Streets means the seismic shift online has become an even bigger battleground – brands are fighting for customers with innovative content formats, both on social and online will have a significant role to play in 2019.

# SOCIAL TV

## Life in 9:16 - the year of social TV

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**The bespoke creation of 'social only' TV shows is big business, with brands breaking new ground with movies in 9:16. As a generation of young filmmakers and editors emerges, expect high quality, long-form social video to become the norm. Also known as 'vertical video', 9:16 has given us a new consumption perspective.**

In the past, filmmakers needed expensive crew, equipment and editing suites to make something worth watching. Today, filmmakers can grab a good camera and Adobe Premier, or even a solid video-editing smartphone app and strike social gold. With IGTV providing the perfect platform to go create, brands like National Geographic, Mercedes-Benz and Spotify are already paving the way. Even traditional, big-budget broadcasters are using the channel to amplify conversation and attract eyeballs to their shows, using what-happened-next cliff-hangers and second-screen content to drive engagement. Brands have experimented with content 'jacking'; fashion magnet Boohoo recently fused influencer marketing, social comms and s-commerce during last summer's run of Love Island, letting viewers shop the look. Brands need to sit up and pay attention to the 9:16 format, which will be key in the push towards social-first strategies.



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Until now, we've been conditioned to viewing film and TV through a 16:9 aesthetic and I think this is about to change in a big way. Spend 5 minutes on Instagram Stories and you'll find that the next generation of creators are already working to a 9:16-first composition. We'll see more and more independent filmmakers shooting 9:16 short films and documentaries in 2019.

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George Guildford, Executive Creative Director, Punch







# SONIC BRANDING

## Podcasts will overtake daily live radio listens by 2020

**As the podcast renaissance goes from strength to strength, we predict that 2019 will see the format overtake listening figures for live radio shows among certain demographics - especially young adults.**

Many claim that we're living in the golden age of UK radio. While this is true to an extent, digital channels are responsible for a lot of the medium's success. More popular with every passing year, podcasting has legions of diehard fans, who listen as part of their daily routine: driving, working, exercising, commuting, even while falling asleep.

While many of the big radio shows have their own podcasts, current monster hits include Serial, S-Town, Love Island and the intriguingly titled My Dad Wrote a Porno. Apps like Anchor and Soundcloud have made it easier and more accessible than ever for brands and content creators to create, upload and build audiences around their own audio content. With 18.5 million episodes of 550k active podcasts out there and hundreds of thousands of hours of catch-up radio available on demand, we are positive that daily podcast listening figures will overtake live radio listens among young adults in 2019.

# TRANSPARENCY

## Platforms will grow a conscience

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**For all its golden moments, people are beginning to question the value of social media – particularly in light of recent events. Facebook believes the data of up to 87 million people was improperly shared with political consultancy Cambridge Analytica scandal – 1.1 million of them in the UK.**

Encountering voices and brands whose values differ so wildly from our own can be challenging – exhausting even. In response to mounting pressure from the courts, media and the social community at large, platforms are finally owning and embracing their responsibilities, with many brands doing the same – using their voice and reach for good. As social reaches a crossroads, honesty is undoubtedly the best policy. Customers are demanding more from the brands they give their money to – and the social platforms they use. Expect more fanfare and PR from various channels, highlighting their transparency, wellbeing measures and the work they are doing to cleanse their platforms. Brands should be prepared to shift spend to other platforms or mediums in a bid to make these changes heard. High-profile appointments from business and politics will be made by the big networks and work in the wellbeing space to better understand the impact of social media on mental health.



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Consumers have shown support for socially conscious brands for years now, with businesses offering shoppers opportunities to make a positive impact for both people and the planet. These purpose-led messages are set to become central to social media marketing campaigns as brands prioritise aligning business practices with consumer values.

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Samantha Lowther, Senior Account Manager, Punch





# BRANDED COMMUNITIES

## Groups to take centre stage

**Facebook groups are a way for people and brands to discuss shared interests, debate, collaborate, inspire and educate - all the things great branded content should do. In 2019, we predict brands will be prioritising strong branded communities, with the savviest sponsoring and buying groups from their niche.**

One of the few areas that actually benefited from Facebook's latest algorithm change, community posts now have more reach than most other types of brand pages. Powered by Zuckerberg's belief that groups "bring the world closer together", Facebook is going all in on brand communities in 2019, using groups as a way of putting family and friends back at the core of the social experience. Groups now sits in the bottom menu bar on the app and thus is far more prominent than it was before.

We predict this year will see brands tackling user communities in new ways, with niche pages being bought by larger competitors and evolved social listening practices. The cleverest brands will be sponsoring specific niche groups and using insight from brand association to create content specifically on a 1-2-1 or 1-2-many basis.

# VOICE

## Shouts a little louder

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**While not everyone uses voice search just yet, a new generation are being raised with devices like Google's Home and Amazon's Alexa in the room. In 2019 we'll see a host of weird and wonderful campaigns being developed around voice search.**

For those who own a voice-activated speaker, life would now feel quite strange without one. According to Google, 72% of these voice searchers claim their devices play a large part of their daily routines. Offering a "human relationship with technology", brands should think carefully about how to better optimise their marketing strategies with voice search in mind.

To truly become a household name, brands, as ever, will need to think outside the box with their campaigns. Diet Coke Mango provides a simple example of this. Whatever you think of the new ad (and Diet Coke Mango, for that matter) the voice search prompt it gives is the shape of things to come: "Hey Alexa, send me a sample for a free Diet Coke."





# BLOCKCHAIN

## The war on fake news.

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**2019 could be a crucial year for blockchain. Because it can be used to track and record everything of value, we predict blockchain will soon house a relatively secure social media platform where our personal data is protected and news is accurate and resistant to censorship - ushering in a new era of transparency and authenticity.**

Information-sharing is complicated in the post-truth age. From Brexit to the election of Donald Trump, many believe that rhetoric on social media has played a huge role in political events over the past couple of years. With revolutionary applications for blockchain being dreamt up all over the place, we predict that social platforms will aim to use the incorruptible ledger to guard against personal data breaches and tackle the fake news problem. It's already happening: by storing articles on the blockchain, the Decentralized News Network promises to distribute "censorship-resistant and verifiable news", while ensuring accuracy and transparency through incentivisation: meaning sources are cited and community verified in exchange for stake tokens. Because it can't be hacked or corrupted, blockchain also provides users with control over their personal data, along with the rights to monetise elements if they so choose. No more Cambridge Analytica.

# CHATBOTS

## Your new best friends

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**While it's true that chatbots are nothing new, 2019 will see them develop further, with more human-like AI interactions, branded emojis, GIF comments - and even the odd dose of British humour.**

Will AI ever be able to crack a joke and genuinely make us chuckle? As advancements in the area leave the Turing test in the dust, we think it's a yes. Used to streamline customer service, chatbots communicate quickly and efficiently: solving queries, performing basic tasks and delivering 'rich' content replies.

Delivering valuable content in a relaxed, informal space sends your customers a clear message. You're saying: *we're friends*. In 2019 chatbots will become more human-like than ever before. Expect to see bespoke GIFs, branded emoji keyboards and unprecedented levels of scale and personalisation. With bots to recommend products, order your favourite pizza and even hail you a cab, playful usefulness will remain key in creating loveable machine overlords. Get it wrong and your bots will be annoying and off-putting. Inform and entertain and you'll facilitate better relationships with your customers.





# AMAZON OPTIMISATION

## In 2019 is AO more important than SEO?

With more than 40 per cent of the e-commerce market, Amazon holds unrivalled volumes of purchase and behavioural data linked to sales. As it launches its own digital advertising platform and leads the race in voice search, optimising content for Amazon will become increasingly important in 2019.

Bookshop, supermarket, streaming service, Alexa... Amazon is many things to many people. As the tech giant tightens its grip on every area of our lives, we are likely to see Amazon dominate another market as it targets Google and Facebook to deliver its own digital advertising platform. Looking to create an easy-to-use, self-serve solution, Amazon are working with ad-tech, agencies and media companies to make the advertising experience better and buying ads as easy as their online shopping experience.

It may have a way to go, but Amazon will continue to increase its market share vs. Facebook and Google, innovating with products and formats that get results for its advertisers - provided all content is Amazon-optimised.



# NEW PLATFORM

## One to watch in 2019 - Tik Tok

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**Brands are often (rightly) sceptical when it comes to new social channels – and of course, it’s always worth treading with caution when it comes to spending your precious resources. But once in a while, a new kid on the block comes along that changes everything. According to TechCrunch, TikTok was downloaded more times in November than Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube.**

A new social player from China, TikTok is a “short-video social platform powered by music.” At present having exceeded 100m users on Android, TikTok has 16.8m followers on Instagram: that’s a bigger social following than most of the brands on the British high street combined. Adopting the same 9:16 layout as Snapchat and Instagram Stories, the channel already has new content creators publishing regular content to followers in the millions. For context, comedian/influencer Holly H has 709,000 followers on Instagram but a whopping 11.9 million already on TikTok. BBC Radio 1, Nike and Adidas are amongst the big brand early adopters already on the channel and we expect to see that number rapidly increase in the first part of 2019. Following in the footsteps of music and video platforms like Vine and Musical.ly, TikTok is certainly one to keep your eye on – particularly for brands looking to resonate with a younger demographic.





# SOCIAL-FIRST WORLD

**2019 will see social finally take the strategic spotlight**

**Following years of coming way down in the pecking order, 2019 will see social finally take the strategic spotlight of any brand worth its salt.**

Social media has been with us for more than a decade now. At Punch, it redefined our identity as an agency. Yet for many established brands, social has always been seen as something of an afterthought. Assets created for TV and other channels were simply reformatted for social. This has been fine – until now.

Younger generations who have grown up with social influencers as their go-to are maturing into fully-fledged consumers. Advertising products, targeting options and ROI are getting more sophisticated all the time. Social is a whole new animal, in a position of great power. 2019 will be the year we finally see brands recognise that power across the board.

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Remarkable ideas are hard to come by, but socially-driven brand activation campaigns, steeped in customer insight, that are either funny, useful or remarkable - will help brands with that ‘wow factor’ in 2019. With customer experience front and centre in brand conversations, expect social-first activations to play a huge part in brand uplift as brands aim to put a smile on people’s faces.

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Bryn Foweather, Head of Social, Punch





# about us.

Founded in 2003, Punch is a full-service social agency.

The team's experience and creative curiosity strike the right balance between brand storytelling, influence, and reach; alongside distribution strategies that deliver true value and ROI, for every client. We're lucky to work with some of the world's biggest brands, including Sony, Barclays, Barclaycard, Legal &

General, LinkedIn and John Lewis. Please feel free to get in touch - we'd love the opportunity to talk.

[www.punchcomms.com](http://www.punchcomms.com) | 01858 411600