

3 game-changing digital marketing trends to watch (and explore) for your small business

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No statement could be more apt for the digital age than: 'change is the only constant.' With new and exciting technology emerging by the minute, it can be difficult to keep up. But, by being selective and choosing the mediums that speak directly to your business and your audience, you can capitalise on the trends and ride the wave to business success.



These are three of the digital marketing trends to look out for in 2024 for your small or medium enterprise:

Video content won't give up centre-stage

You would be hard pressed to find any social media user – both abroad and in South Africa – who isn't aware of the rather sudden rise of video content. There's no question about it, social media has become less about searching and more about scrolling. For digital marketers, this change in behaviour is both a mind-boggling challenge as well as an irresistible opportunity.

Brands who jump at the chance to use video content as marketing collateral have amazing odds on their side, but they also need to crack the short-form video code and get their message across in milliseconds – quite literally.

The interesting part is that as the statistics show, there are many marketers out there who are ready and willing to rise to the occasion. And, if there were ever a leading platform to use as a gauge for this claim, it would be TikTok.

According to data gathered by ByteDance, TikTok's potential ad reach in South Africa increased by over 80% in just one year. This finding is even more staggering when considering that as per ByteDance's research, TikTok ads reached almost 30% of all adults aged 18 and above in South Africa at the start of 2023. The momentum is building, and for small businesses with even the tiniest of budgets, there's no time like the present to jump on the video content bandwagon.

What's all the fuss about AI?

No 2024 trends report would be complete without mentioning generative artificial intelligence (AI). ChatGPT, now regarded as being the mainstream AI industry's forerunner in innovation and accessibility, became widely available to South Africa and the rest of the world in 2023. Since its release, it's certainly caused a stir, with some world leaders questioning the very real threats that come with what has been nothing short of a quantum leap for digital technology.

Nevertheless, from what it seems, AI is here to stay – in one form or another, and if you're not using it, there's a good chance you could increase the efficiency of your operations if you did.

There is a variety of ways in which generative AI can be used in the digital marketing field. Even the least experienced brand managers or small business owners can use a tool like ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot to write summaries of long research papers or blog content. It's also been used as a keyword research tool for search engine optimisation, to write social media post copy and to come up with creative ideas for marketing campaigns.

A survey conducted by ITWeb found that the top five use cases for AI by South African businesses are content generation, research purposes, customer support, writing code/scripts and creative tasks. And while there are certainly many pitfalls that come with using a tool like ChatGPT, the benefits cannot be ignored.

The output of tools like these still needs to be sense-checked and fact-checked, edited and adapted, but on the whole, they're one of the most cost-effective and easy ways to do a better job as a small-scale marketer.

Video podcasting? Yes please.

One of the most emerging trends that is just beginning to take shape in the local market, is video supported podcasting for promotional, entertainment and educational purposes. Overseas markets like the US and the UK have led the charge where this is concerned, with podcasters raking in significant sums of money by turning what was once a digital hobby into a fully-fledged career path.

When podcasts first emerged as the technology that would 'take over broadcast radio,' they took the form of audio-only clips, which soon became a popular accompaniment to exercise routines and leisure time. Gradually, podcasters have woken up to the fact that video content is indeed king.

This trend is slowly but surely beginning to emerge on the horizon in South Africa, with predominantly larger corporates beginning to start their own video podcast shows and use the medium to its full potential as a powerful marketing tool.

Over the next year, the South African market will undoubtedly see a video podcast revolution as more content creators step into this space and offer their services to brands and businesses. Small businesses need to be strategic about choosing their partners – getting a message across effectively doesn't always take big budgets. Where podcasts are concerned, it's all about being on the right show and talking about the right thing. Podcasting can also be a worthwhile source of revenue through brand sponsorship, ads, and subscriptions.

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