

Back to the Future

By [Dean Oelschig](#)

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On 21 October 2015 we finally arrived at the future date we watched in the famous movie *Back to the Future*, back in 1989. The hover boards, self-lacing sneakers or flying cars hadn't transpired as were promised. But that's OK.



Because we had the chance to experience the dream of a future and we liked it. It gave us joy. But the dream of 2015 was somewhat more exciting than how things actually turned out in reality of 2015.

Luckily, my job here isn't to predict 26 years into the future; instead, just 2016. But I buy into the idea of a future dream - a dream of how the marketing and advertising industry does things in the next year. If I am proven wrong in the next 12 months, I give you full permission to hold me accountable. I'll buy you lunch.

So my five future trends for 2016 are:

1. It will be like 1995 again

Well kind of. TV advertising was huge in the 90s with fantastic, memorable films for VW, IBM, BMW, Sasol and Castrol. While TV advertising is dying, film advertising has come full circle. Film will be as popular in 2016 as it was in 1995. It's just the media that will now be different.

Thanks to video exploding on Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites in 2015, 2016 will see more advertisers use film again. Video is everywhere and we consume it in volumes. YouTube has over 1 billion users already.

The best advertisers, employed by the bravest clients, will continue to win with film. The Grand Prix for film at Cannes last year was, for the first time, a YouTube-only ad, and a pre-roll at that. YouTube viewership has increased by 40% in 2015

and the average time spent watching per day is now up 60% year-on-year. This will continue to grow aggressively in 2016, largely due to the accessibility and quality of video on mobile...

2. Mobile will overshadow desktop

We have been saying 'mobile, mobile, mobile' for years. But it's finally here. Mobile will totally destroy the desktop in 2016. And it won't be because of apps and gamified marketing; it will be video. And content, gifs and images. All highly visual, emotive and entertaining media that we choose when and where to consume it. See point 1.

The number of people watching YouTube on mobile is up 100% year-on-year and has now overtaken desktop. More than half of YouTube views now come from mobile.

3. We will say goodbye to social media engagement as a metric

I know my first two points are pretty obvious but this one may get some blood boiling. Social media engagement is a vanity metric. Engagement does not sell product or build a brand. Likes, comments, shares and retargeted posts on the latest social flavour of the month may look handy; they're easy to verify and add clout to reports but they don't move stock.

In the world of budget cuts and ROI-mad marketers, engagement is a quick and easy tool to show the board how well their plan is working. But it's a false hope. This stops in 2016. We've become too obsessed with short-term results without having long-term, real brand building plans in place.

4. We begin to question and understand what makes brands truly grow

Agencies and clients alike have been marketing from a base of experimentation, conjecture and dark magic for too long. Research from the likes of Jim Stengel and Byron Sharp (although they disagree with each other) are starting to shed light on the real reasons brands grow, and they both offer some interesting points.

Stengel feels all top brands demonstrate one (or a few) of the five fundamental human values; joy, connection, exploration, pride and impacting society. I personally buy into his thinking that brands consistently delivering and building on their chosen value will build presence in the most important media of all; the consumer's mind.

Byron Sharp uses outstanding data and scientific research to demonstrate a few critical factors. In a nutshell, he concludes that brands can only grow through a consistent delivery of emotive mass marketing that targets light consumers - consumers that you likely consider to be outside your target market.

What is interesting about both views is that they support the notion of consistency and emotional advertising (advertising that is sometimes very difficult to measure). Consistency can only be built from solid, long-term agency partnerships. Emotion is delivered from brave, compelling and provocative advertising that relies on real big ideas. Digital, social, traditional and new media are all just possible channels for the big idea. We have been experimenting with digital for two decades now and still, digital without emotion is at best a short-term gain. Above all else, I dream that in 2016, marketers will come to appreciate this.

5. There will be a trend of not following trends

This is certainly something we, at Halo, aim to achieve this year. And that's to break the mould, do things differently and not follow trends, but try to set them. Agencies and marketers need to always play in front of the wave instead of waiting to see how trends pan out and then start following.

Let's all be brave enough to push creativity and find the new in what we do. Let's not settle for ideas we know. Ultimately, let's not follow trends in 2016; let's create new ones.

ABOUT DEAN OELSCHIG

Dean Oelschig is the founder of Halo, an indie communication design agency that creates ideas for business growth. Halo is setting out to make below-the-line sexy again. Whether it's design, digital or direct, below-the-line communication based on a brave idea can give business incredible returns.

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