

# 3 Biggest Social Media Trends to Know for 2016

Not all apps have the same power to grab consumer attention. Here are the most notable (and applicable) social media trends that experts predict will emerge this year.



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IMAGE: Getty Images

If you want to know what's in store for the future of online advertising, ditch the crystal ball. Instead, take a look at the Snapchat videos, Instagram photos, and Tweets from brands that made headlines in 2015.

According to digital research firm eMarketer, 88.2 percent of all U.S. companies use [at least one social media platform](#) for marketing purposes. This means there's no shortage of advice on how to best use social for your business.

Here are the three most notable (and applicable) trends that social media researchers and consultants predict will emerge in 2016.

1. Video will become the native advertising platform of choice.

According to Ian Schafer, CEO of advertising agency Deep Focus, Snapchat had one of the best years of any social platform in 2015, and will continue to generate plenty of buzz this year.

"Snapchat is delivering something that is in scarce supply," says Schafer, referring primarily to Millennials and younger audiences. Even though companies are still figuring out what kind of ads Snapchat users best respond to, they still have the advantage of treading familiar territory.

"Video is the muscle that advertisers have flexed for the longest time, and are willing to pay the greatest premium for," he said.

What's more, many consumers view it as the least invasive platform for native advertising, says Schafer. Take '[Puppyhood](#),' for example, a native video advertisement from Purina that appeared on BuzzFeed's YouTube channel in early 2015. Counting 81.3 million views, it became one of [the most-viewed videos on Facebook](#).

2. Virtual reality will continue to be a buzz-worthy platform, but don't expect it to have a great ROI.

This one's a toss up. Social media consultant Amy Vernon named virtual reality and augmented reality as one of her [social media trends](#) to watch this year.

"The low, low price point of Google Cardboard and other VR goggles makes this something that anyone can afford," writes Vernon. The *New York Times*' augmented reality app, which was released in November, netted the media company's [most successful app launch to date](#).

"You'll see more attempts like that to get VR into the hands of consumers," says Noah Mallin, head of social at the North American branch of media agency MEC Global.

But Schafer isn't sold that VR and AR ads and apps will provide any value beyond media buzz. "I just don't think virtual reality will have enough value to advertisers until it's a mainstream experience, and I don't expect that to happen in 2016," he said.

3. Mobile messaging apps will become an increasingly popular space for customer interaction.

Yes, mobile has been an important space in social for a long time, with [approximately 2.6 billion smartphone users](#) worldwide. But with the rise of mobile messaging apps (i.e., WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger), it's going to be even more important that businesses integrate them into their social media strategy.

According to a forecast from eMarketer earlier this year, approximately [1.4 billion people used mobile messaging apps in 2015](#), a 31.6 increase from 2014.

"For a business that really has to think about where its resources are, putting your resources into reaching customers through a place like Facebook Messenger and Twitter is a smart way to bring that service experience to life," says Mallin.

Take Uber, which made headlines a few weeks ago with its newly-announced partnership with Facebook Messenger, which [allows customers to hail a ride through the mobile app](#).

Even if businesses don't have a product to sell on Facebook Messenger, Mallin says they should still use mobile messaging apps to interact with customers. Many companies have been doing this via Twitter's direct messaging feature for a long time, but with more users, Facebook Messenger provides brands with a greater ability to scale their customer interactions.