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BEYOND THE BUZZWORDS

Disruptive voices from the marketing industry today



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Dear reader,

Philip Kotler, 'The Father of Modern Marketing', once famously wrote that "markets always change faster than the marketer". This quote from 2003 has never been more true than it is 16 years later.

A whopping 76% of marketers today say that in the last two years marketing has changed more than in the previous 50. This is one truly dynamic industry that's being constantly reshaped by the stampeding pace of innovative companies, disruptive tech like AI, growth marketing and the ever-changing face of social media.

So, where does this state of perpetual evolution leave the average marketer? I've spent the last few months talking to marketing thought leaders about the industry and the process of embracing disruption. Here's a collection of some of the things they told me about marketing today, and what it will look like tomorrow – beyond the buzzwords.

Enjoy,



Caitlin Stanway-Williams

(Content Editor at Datasine)



How is data and AI disrupting marketing?

Data is the name of the game when it comes to optimising marketing today, and, in recent years, AI has been the word on everyone's lips. Here's what some of the industry's most innovative thought leaders told me about how data and AI is changing up the game.

How is data and AI disrupting marketing?

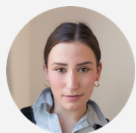
“It’s all about data! You need to understand what’s happened and worked in the past through that process of trial and error to predict how successful influencers will be.”



Harry Hugo,

Serial Entrepreneur and Co-Founder of influencer marketing agency The Goat Agency

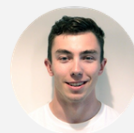
“AI and machine learning leverage the data we now have available to us to mitigate marketers’ workloads and make campaigns much more efficient and effective.”



Emily Miller,

Head of Marketing at Ollie Quinn
(Full interview on page 16)

“Automation soon will become the default, and this will level the playing field amongst advertisers. Once this starts to happen, the advertisers with the competitive edge will be those who are able to squeeze the most out of automation. These will be the advertisers who are best able to personalise their marketing, understand customer lifetime value and automate across their channels rather than just on a channel-by-channel basis.”



Mack Grenfell,

Biddable Lead at digital health service Babylon Health

How is data and AI disrupting marketing?

“It’s about knowing your audience and trying to get as many data points as you can on them, then waiting until the right moment to start targeting them with meaningful content that resonates as opposed to generic content that feels like an imposition.”



Karla Rivershaw,

Head of Marketing at Turtl

“AI is paving the way for next-generation marketing. The fast-growing capabilities of artificial intelligence will help marketers to identify hidden customer behaviour patterns that will be beneficial to generating personalised content experiences.”

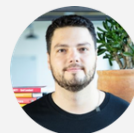


Mohamed El Hannaoui,

Growth Marketer
(Full interview on page 7)


“Becoming more data-informed means you spend resources more efficiently and you take less time to achieve the performance of an expert.”

“With the help of an AI tool like Datasine Connect, a novice marketer can become a mini-expert in channels like Facebook or Instagram much faster because they don’t have to test as many variations since the tool already suggests what will be engaging.”



Bernardo Nunes,

Head of Science at Growth Tribe
(Full interview on page 24)

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“It’s becoming increasingly harder to both raise awareness and convince people to buy certain products using the traditional approaches.”

Mohamed El Hannaoui, Growth Marketer



Interview - with Mohamed El Hannaoui

Experienced Growth Marketer Mohamed El Hannaoui has more than a decade of experience working in digital strategy, growth and marketing. He outlines how the industry has changed in the last 10 years, what role AI will play in disrupting the next decade – and how startups can optimise their marketing efforts to challenge the big players in this new landscape where everything is up for grabs.

TLDR;

Consumer decision-making is happening across more channels than ever before, so traditional approaches are increasingly outdated

AI and marketing automation are shaping content marketing and personalisation by helping marketers understand consumers' behaviour patterns

Getting to know your customers intimately is worth more than any 'growth hack'

I see four trends that have had a huge impact on the marketing industry in the last decade:

- **Personalised data-driven marketing that leverages big data and user-generated content to create unique experiences for individuals**
- **Online behavioural targeting and customer segmentation: Google and Facebook have big AI initiatives and the tools that marketers use today provide unbelievable amounts of information**
- **Marketing has become less aggressive, led by the growth of inbound marketing and social selling**
- **There has been an evolution of content consumption, changing the content people read and the media we consume drastically**



Interview - with Mohamed El Hannaoui



Marketing practitioners are aware that there will be increasing complexity in consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers use almost all online channels to make shopping decisions – from YouTube and Facebook to TikTok – and it’s becoming increasingly harder to both raise awareness and convince people to buy certain products using the traditional approaches.

“AI is shaping the future of content marketing and personalisation”

This is exactly where AI comes into play. There is no doubt that AI is shaping the future of content marketing and personalisation, and marketing automation, AI, machine learning and data science are a few of the leading factors which will determine the course of the industry over the next decade or so.

AI is paving the way for next-generation marketing. The fast-growing capabilities of artificial intelligence will help marketers to identify hidden customer behaviour patterns that will be beneficial to generating personalised content experiences.

Undoubtedly, AI has the potential to revolutionise the way we create personalised campaigns to reach potential customers in all stages of the marketing funnel.



Interview - with Mohamed El Hannaoui

Corporate marketing has been around for a long time and works extremely well for well-established companies. But obviously large companies have different agendas and budgets to startups when it comes to marketing. In the early days at a startup, the marketing priority of founders is to make a profit and gain traction. However, they usually can't afford to use the same tactics as corporate marketing teams, so they must come up with unconventional ways to survive and cut through the noise. Marketing teams at startups tend to embrace the growth marketing mindset which involves focusing all efforts on achieving the "one metric that matters" (or OMTM).

For example, this OMTM might be: number of leads, visit-to-subscription or customer lifetime value (LTV). To improve OMTM they often run multiple experiments simultaneously, trying to get the fast answers they need to decide on which channels, offers and story narrative they will be using.



There's a lot of challenges when it comes to achieving OMTM, but the ones I encounter the most are:

- 1. Micromanagement**
- 2. Limited marketing budget**
- 3. Founders simply not trusting the marketing team and their judgment**
- 4. Finding and hiring the right talents**
- 5. Building an audience through consistent quality content**
- 6. Identifying the most profitable target market**



Interview - with Mohamed El Hannaoui

“Nothing else matters if you don’t know your customer's deepest pains and problems”



Marketing teams that become obsessed with tactics, tools and tips, is something I see a lot, but unfortunately there are a lot of myths and misunderstandings around what growth hacking is, so they can often be working with the wrong guidance.

My advice for marketing teams in the startup space is that they need to know their customers intimately. When it comes to acquiring new customers, the most basic starting point is to build the right marketing foundations and avoid what’s called ‘random acts of marketing’: tactics that are not aligned to a startup audience or business goals.

Thanks to the advancement of technology, it’s quite easy to reach potential customers, but connecting and building trust has never been harder. Nothing else matters if you don’t know your customer's deepest pains and problems.

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“Semantic content analysis will disrupt marketing”

Jergan Callebaut, Lead Strategist and
Head of Psychology at Datasine



Semantic content analysis - Jergan Callebaut

Brussels-born Jergan Callebaut, Lead Strategist and Head of Psychology Datasine, holds degrees in both Clinical Psychology and Business Psychology. At Datasine, he is responsible for scaling and implementing data-driven processes. He explains what semantic content analysis is, and how, coupled with AI, it's taking the marketing world by storm.

Most of us can probably agree that exceptional creatives are what make exceptional campaigns. We also know that utilising our data to very specifically target audiences gives ROI a significant boost. But we rarely put the two together and use the data available to actually analyse what content works – and why. Yet knowing exactly why content works can give us that winning edge. And, luckily, the ability to see what indisputably resonates the most with our audience – and drives our bottom-line – is already in our hands.

“The ability to see what indisputably resonates the most with our audience is already in our hands”

Marketers today dedicate huge chunks of time to creating personas, segmenting users and running lengthy A/B tests to create and send out the ads their audience will engage with. We use the vast amounts of data we have access to, to understand what creatives have been most successful, and use this information to optimise campaigns. But there's a missing piece of this puzzle: when we do find that winning ad, we don't actually know why it's worked. We don't know exactly what features caused the higher CTR. And, what's more, we don't know how to recreate it in the future. We call this lack of knowledge the 'black box' because just looking at results doesn't give us the insight needed to actionably understand content preferences.



Semantic content analysis - Jergan Callebaut

To crack open the black box, a great place to start is by conducting in-depth semantic analysis on your marketing creatives.

This isn't as complicated as it sounds! As marketers, we've already got access to a great deal of understanding of human psychology and a fascination with our audience. It's simply a matter of breaking creatives down into parts, and using the data we have to understand what semantic features correlate with higher or lower engagement. We'll look at this in terms of images, but you can also apply the same principles to text, video and more.

To analyse the impact of your past images, look at all the image assets you've ever created and note down the particular elements you used in each. For example:

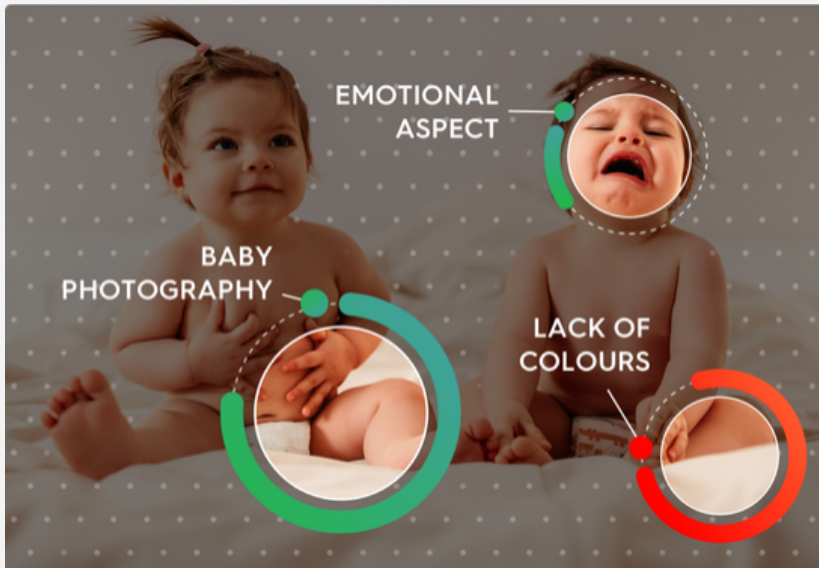
- **Did you use a photo of your product outdoors? Or in the showroom?**
- **Were people visible in the shot?**
- **What colours were present in the image?**

Once you've broken down your image assets into their features, you can then see if there are any patterns which relate those choices to how well ads containing those elements performed. With semantic content analysis, you can see which types of content are receiving the most engagement, and begin using these features in future campaigns.






“AI models can extract all of these elements in seconds”



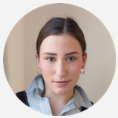
If we have just a few campaigns on the go, content analysis is easier, but it gets harder as we scale. It stops being practical to expect humans to spend days, weeks, even months labelling what goes into each piece of content. Here’s where machine learning and AI step in.

AI models can extract all of these elements in seconds by analysing image or text semantically to look at content in the same way humans would. That way, we can cut back on lengthy, expensive A/B testing, and get rid of guesswork once and for all: a vision we at Datasine are working toward. Our AI platform Connect automatically identifies the most effective content for your audience. Working collaboratively with AI, we can feel confident in understanding exactly what content is going to work before we hit ‘send’

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“The pressure to produce significant ROI in a short space of time is greater than ever.”

Emily Miller, Head of Marketing at Ollie Quinn



Interview - with Emily Miller

Toronto-born Emily Miller started her career in PR at global colossus Edelman, where she moved into corporate communications. Now living in London, she heads up marketing at independent eyewear brand, Ollie Quinn. She talks marketing metrics, AI and personalising communications.

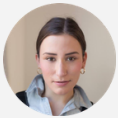
TLDR;

More sophisticated metrics are available to marketers' than ever before, but this has put significant pressure on ROI

AI isn't something to fear, but the onus is on marketers to use it ethically

The more personalised content is, the less often it needs to be delivered to have the intended impact

It's a really interesting time to be in marketing. Up until recently, the only metrics marketers used to benchmark the success of their campaigns were things like average or estimated impressions (an educated guess at the number of views an ad received). Being a marketer in the digital era means we finally have metrics that track the full conversion funnel and measure mROI – previously quite a nebulous concept and frequent point of contention between CFOs and CMOs. As tech giants like Google and Facebook sophisticate their offerings, these metrics – particularly mROI – become much more accurate. For marketers in the current economic climate, this is a double-edged sword. Tools like Google Analytics, Facebook Ads Manager and various email/CRM platforms can tell us about our return on investment, but the pressure to produce significant ROI in a short space of time is greater than ever, as investors seek considerable short-term returns in the age of billion-dollar valuations and unicorn startups.



Interview - with Emily Miller

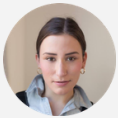
In this age, I'd say every digital marketer needs an effective CRM platform that stores and manages data in compliance with regional regulations (like GDPR), a great email marketing platform that leverages AI and machine learning to tailor content to subscribers, an Instagram grid planner (like Planoly or Snug) that helps one visualise a branded Instagram account as a whole, and of course, Google Analytics.

“AI and machine learning can help marketers optimise their budgets”

The availability of more sophisticated metrics

has put vast pressure on digital marketers to deliver ROI. AI and machine learning can help marketers optimise their budgets by course-correcting the parameters of online ads and content (often in real time) so less of one's marketing budget is wasted. There's also AI that saves us valuable time and energy by telling us whether or not content will receive engagement or results before we place it in-market. This is invaluable to marketers whose task is to stand out on ultra-saturated channels.

Essentially, AI and machine learning leverage the data we now have available to us to mitigate marketers' workloads and make campaigns much more efficient and effective.

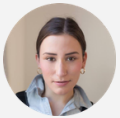


Interview - with Emily Miller



While AI is an incredible tool for marketers, it's also the type of innovation that instills fear of Orwellian dystopias. Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple – these companies know us better than we know ourselves. The data collected on our behaviours and preferences is comprehensive and immensely detailed. Artificial intelligence can be used to leverage this data in myriad ways, but the onus is on marketers to utilise AI ethically and responsibly, which is why policies like GDPR are so important.

“Customised information allows for less frequent dissemination of information”



Interview - with Emily Miller

Ultimately, it's beneficial for both marketer and consumer when content is tightly tailored to one's interests and needs, but there's a fine line between catering to one's tendencies and invading a consumer's privacy. I would say the more personalised your content, the less often you need to deliver that content to your audience. Customised information allows for less frequent dissemination of information because you've tailored the messaging to the individual so it resonates upon first encounter.



Here's a simplified example: you're handing out flyers to all passersby to promote an event and all the flyers have the same information printed on them.

That content is general enough that you could also put up signs in the area you handed out flyers in that same week, without seeming invasive. If, however, you mail personalised, hand-written notes to a carefully curated list of people to promote the event, telling each person why they'd enjoy the event based on intel you have about each of them, you have less need to put up posters near those people's houses that same week. The message you delivered the first time likely resonated, and delivering more personalised information to those same recipients in a short space of time is more likely to make them feel annoyed, bombarded, or as though they've had their privacy invaded.

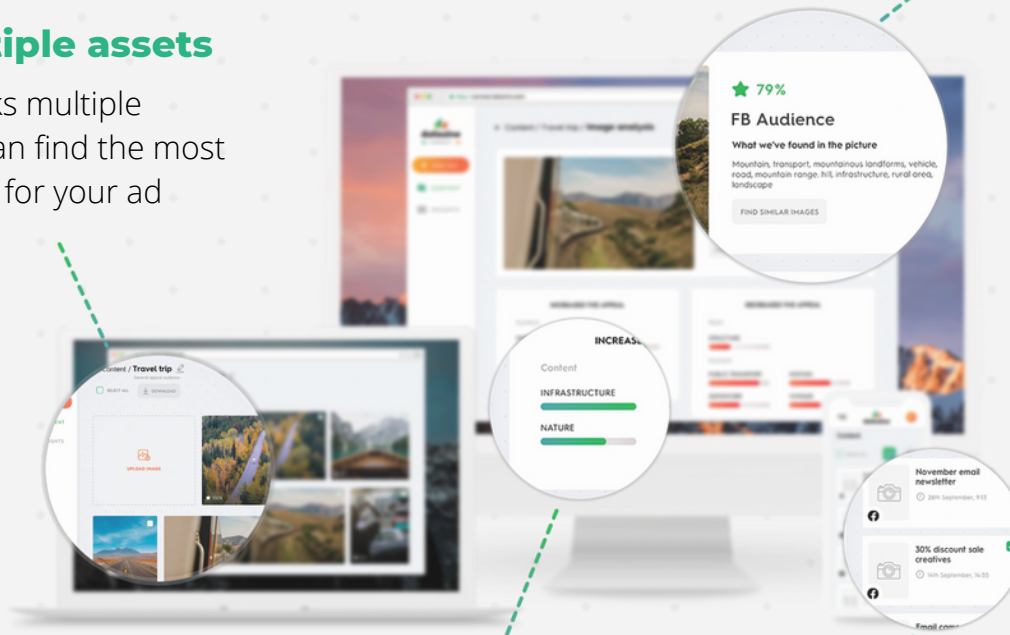
Datasine Connect: effective Facebook creatives. Not guesswork.

Upload multiple assets

Connect's AI ranks multiple images, so you can find the most effective creative for your ad

Engagement rating

Using your Facebook Ads campaign data, Connect predicts how engaging your creative will be



AI image analysis

Connect's analysis explains exactly what features made the creative more or less engaging

Multiple integrations

Integrates with Facebook Ads and Mailchimp, with Hubspot, Google Ads and more on the way!



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Five lessons learned from marketing leaders

Caitlin Stanway-Williams, Content Editor at Datasine





Five lessons learned - Caitlin Stanway-Williams

Working at an AI Martech company on the cutting edge of marketing practices, I hear a lot from members of my own team and industry thought-leaders about what marketing's most important trends are. At this halfway point, I thought I would share five of the biggest lessons I learned while I was putting these interviews together.



1- **Data-driven marketing is now the industry standard**

First and foremost, data was top of mind for every marketer I spoke with, proving once more that, in 2019, data-driven marketing is the industry standard.

This was something that was reflected in an event we hosted in October 2019. From Digital Strategist at PMG Advertising, Vysh Ranjan's praise of Spotify's use of data to engage consumers to Head of Marketing at Turtl, Karla Rivershaw's compelling case that we must use data to understand what form of content our readers find most engaging, the practice was invariably leading the way for these innovative marketers.

Biddable Lead at digital health service Babylon Health, Mack Grenfell, is another thought leader who outlined how data can be a driver for a more streamlined society. He explained how the digital health service is disrupting medicine by serving ads that promote the next available appointment – all in real time. All I can say is: keep up the good work!



2- Experiment, experiment, and experiment again

“Being wrong might hurt you,” UK Country Manager at Growth Tribe, Mitch Platt me recently, quoting Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos. “But being slow will kill you.”

Mitch spoke convincingly about the power of experimenting in marketing. In other words, that oft-cited phrase: ‘failing fast’. He encouraged marketers to use Growth Tribe’s ‘Growth Marketing Transformation Pyramid’, the foundation of which is mindset, followed by process, then people and finally ending with the tactics that make up experiments. This process of experimenting must be constant, he explained.

If you’re one of those marketers that keeps putting experiments on the back burner, some food for thought: according to a recent Econsultancy report, leading marketers are more than twice as likely to conduct “big bet” experiments than the mainstream.





Five lessons learned - Caitlin Stanway-Williams

3- **If your content isn't interactive, it's not working**

While, according to the Content Marketing Institute, 75% of content marketers report using technology to gain insight into how their content is performing, just 56% use it to understand audience preferences and behaviour. Failing to understand what your readers want to see is something Karla Rivershaw, Head of Marketing at Turtl, considers a BIG mistake.

Images are more likely to make content engaging, with visuals making your content 43% more persuading, Karla explained. But, most significantly, content that's interactive is much, much more likely to be engaging for audiences, with 45% of buyers finding interactive content 'very effective' at educating. Therefore, serious consideration into the medium we're using to share information must be made.

4- **Semantic content analysis is going to disrupt marketing**

"The industry has a problem," Datasine's Lead Strategist and Head of Psychology, Jergan Callebaut, proclaimed. "People hate ads."

Pointing to the fact that the average ad click through rate (CTR) currently hovers below a meagre 1%, Jergan believes that using AI to understand what content your audience loves can solve this pressing problem.

"We can use psychology to understand what features are in an ad, and our engagement data to see which features are causing the most engagement," he explained. "That's where AI trained on psychological insights steps in, to let you know what your audience actually wants to engage with."



Five lessons learned - Caitlin Stanway-Williams



5- Investing in yourself is key

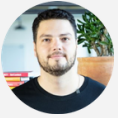
A common theme emerges when talking to marketing thought leaders: the value of investing in yourself as a marketer – and its power to deliver results across your campaigns.

Emily Miller, Head of Marketing at Ollie Quinn, and Vysh Ranjan, Digital Strategist at PMG Advertising, both urge their peers to keep trying new things to help them progress in marketing and find what they love.

Meanwhile, Head of Growth Marketing at Pasta Evangelists, Emma Wynne, offered me some sage advice: “Digital marketing is changing, and the best marketers are those who are constantly learning and trying new things.” She encouraged fellow marketers to hungrily consume industry blogs, podcasts and always be open to learning new skills. I certainly don’t need telling twice.

“People mistakenly think machine learning can be used for every task, but most of the time AI is for automating the predictable, repetitive tasks.”

Bernardo Nunes, Head of Science at Growth Tribe



Interview - with Bernardo Nunes

Data science extraordinaire and Head of Science at Europe's first growth academy, Growth Tribe, Bernardo Nunes is well versed at using behavioural science, data analytics and digital solutions to predict consumer behaviour. He discusses how companies can cultivate talent and begin integrating AI into their marketing processes.

TLDR;

Data Scientists who understand business proposition and can effectively communicate results are needed to overcome the high rates of abandoned data projects

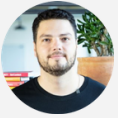
Businesses must understand AI and its limitations to run 'feasible projects'

Becoming more data-informed means spending resources more efficiently and taking less time to achieve the performance of an expert

Growth Tribe is an educational company that's trying to enhance digital skills and literacy in the workplace, and we have two key audiences

First we have the young talent. This is a group who are looking to acquire skills faster, so their training lasts for 6-12 months. From this pool, companies can hire new talent or build their existing workforce's skills in areas such as growth and AI. In these courses we teach digital experimentation and machine learning tips to improve customer journeys, for example helping them understand patterns in their users' behaviour to improve personas.

We also have a data science training system for the young talent, where bigger companies can hire from the talent pool or enroll their current workforce to gain skills to become what we call a "Type A Data Scientist".



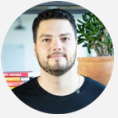
Interview - with Bernardo Nunes

A Type A Data Scientist is someone who understands business proposition and can effectively communicate the results of the analysis. They are different from “Type B Data Scientists” who are normally the builders and put the results of the analysis into production, but don’t necessarily know how to communicate the results to the rest of the company. This lack of communication very frequently leads to frustration and what we call ‘the last mile’ problem, which is when many of the projects are never deployed or utilised again once they are produced.

Growth Tribe mostly deals with upscaling experienced professionals, mainly from marketing backgrounds. This takes the form of crash courses that last for two days – or six evening classes. These educate them how to optimise metrics for growth and adopt a marketing funnel approach.



“Decision-makers need to understand this intersection between what’s possible and what’s necessary to be solved”



Interview - with Bernardo Nunes

The advice I would give to companies just starting out using AI is: educate yourself on how to evaluate the effectiveness and value of AI.

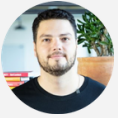
We always coach decision-makers to first understand what the tech can do and what business problems it can currently solve. Very frequently, people mistakenly think machine learning can be used for every task, but we have to demonstrate to them that most of the time AI is for automating the predictable, repetitive tasks.

Decision-makers need to understand this intersection between what's possible and what's necessary to be solved – what we call the 'feasible projects' – and this decision-maker needs to find which are profitable and ethical, making that intersection even smaller.

The ethical issues surrounding AI is a big one. To tackle this we try to demystify some of the aspects of the technology. For example, we discuss the interpretability of different algorithms: what a white box/black box algorithm is and what level of information each of them provides the decision-maker as well as the consumer. We outline which algorithms comply with the idea of both user and customer having the right to an explanation of how the tech they are using works.

Fairness is another topic that comes up. People are often concerned that the algorithms they want to use, or are using, are impartial because they've been trained with data previously labelled by humans, and has picked up their bias. Companies often come to us after they've gathered data that they realise is biased now that they are building models.

Many businesses and individuals also come to us because they feel their knowledge and skills are limited and they want to be more data-informed – to have more insights to understand personas better so they can improve customer journeys. They are looking to continue the optimisation process that started with digital experimentation, and machine learning is the top concern for them now.



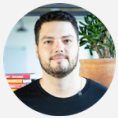
“You get higher uplift if you have data-informed presumptions before you start experimenting”

Becoming more data-informed means you spend resources more efficiently and you take less time to achieve the performance of an expert.

With the help of an AI tool like Datasine Connect, a novice marketer can become a mini-expert in channels like Facebook or Instagram much faster because they don't have to test as many variations since the tool already suggests what will be engaging

The same goes for any predictive model tool in marketing – using machine learning we can predict things like retention and user referrals, which can then be analysed to understand the causal effects. For example, if I observe in my statistical model that desktop users are converting more than mobile users then I can try to look at why this is happening and optimise the mobile customer experience.

Usually you get higher uplift if you have data-informed presumptions before you start experimenting.



Interview - with Bernardo Nunes



I'm most excited for the ability to use and expand on computer vision and voice assistants.

In the last 10 years, the introduction of products such as mobile phones means that we've begun to process huge amounts of unstructured data in forms such as photos, video and audio files. This kind of data is the fuel for building, training and testing algorithms that can act as substitutes for a few tasks humans can do – for example the semantic content analysis that is behind Datasine Connect's image scoring.

Voice assistants are just at the beginning of their evolution and will become far more advanced. In the near-future we will see products like this that will be far more based on vision and speech or text summaries while still profiting from the previous advancement of AI and algorithms.



“Asking yourself whether you would want your data used in this way is usually the best place to start.”

Emma Wynne, Head of Growth Marketing at Pasta Evangelists



Interview - with Emma Wynne

Emma Wynne spent six years in advertising before 'seeing the light' and moving into digital marketing. She helped grow Australia's answer to Time Out, Urban List, before becoming Head of Growth Marketing at Pasta Evangelists. She discusses the 'fear of AI' and staying up-to-date with data regulations.



I'm a very goal-focussed person. Put a target in front of me and I'll do anything I can to hit it. So, for that reason, analytics tools like Google Analytics and our boutique BI at Pasta Evangelists that shows us sales and retention metrics by channel is my first click every morning. As marketing and business owners become more sophisticated and CPAs rise it's important to be able to not only have a great attribution model, but also be able to track that attribution beyond initial purchase.

“Machine learning [...] leaves marketers doing what they do best: mixing creativity and science”



Interview - with Emma Wynne

Obviously there is a little fear around AI

taking marketing jobs. But I see it as an absolute positive. Machine learning taking on the more intricate roles like self-optimisation of campaigns, finding audiences online, personalisation of email campaigns and push notifications, leaves marketers open to doing what they do best: mixing creativity and science to develop new ideas and enter into new channels while AI works in the background to drive more efficient and effective campaigns in a shorter period of time.

Like many things in marketing

taking a step back and putting yourself in the consumer's shoes is always the first step when implementing personalisation. Asking yourself whether you would want your data used in this way is usually the best place to start.





Interview - with Emma Wynne

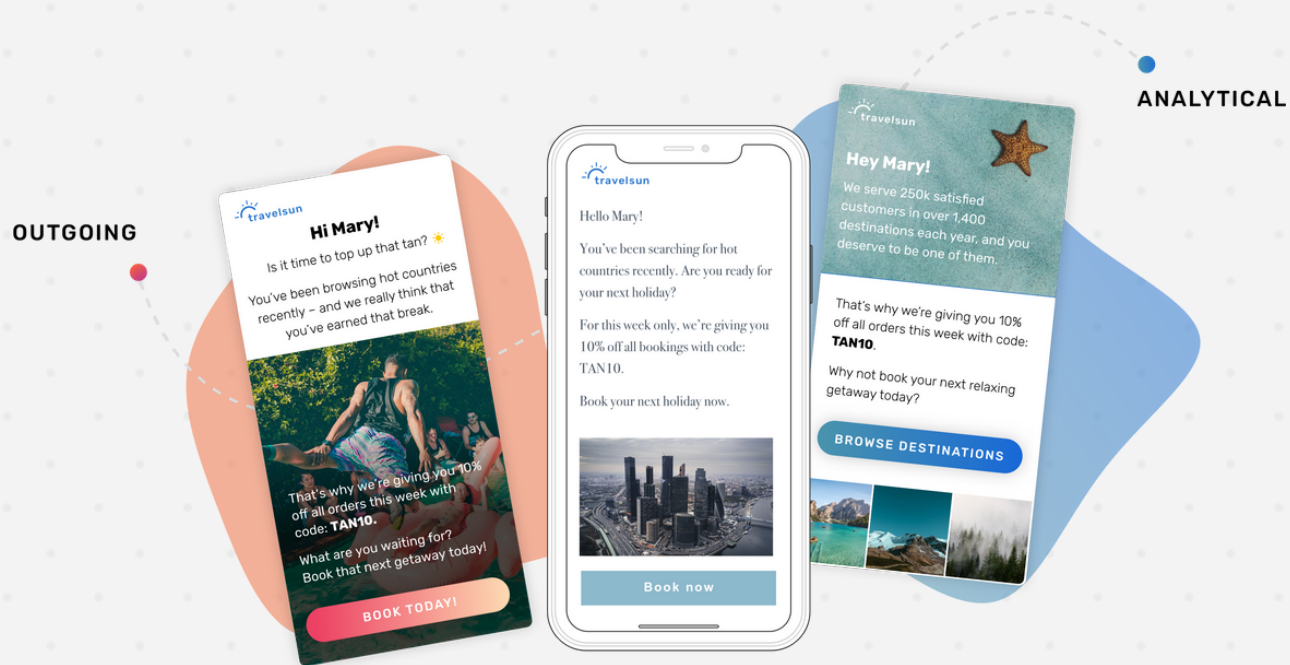
“Taking a step back and putting yourself in the consumer’s shoes is always the first step when implementing personalisation”

My second piece of advice is to be completely up-to-date with legislation (GDPR, etc.) and continually considering it when dealing with customer data. Not following these legislations can have serious knock-on effects for yourself and the business you work for.

In my previous role, I was working on a children’s education app based in the US. Apps collect infinitely more data about their users than the web and send it to all sorts of third parties. While I was there, Apple released an update to their guidelines that meant that kids apps could no longer use third-party software, in response to data concerns. This caused a ripple of panic throughout the kids' app sector. For many brands, this update meant they would need to spend huge budgets building their own first-party software, stop selling on the Appstore, or shutdown. While Apple has now extended the deadline so it hasn’t been enforced yet, it demonstrated to me, just how seriously these platforms are taking personal data. Marketers need to play by the rules to avoid getting burnt.

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What are content preferences - and how can you use them in marketing?



Content preferences - James Gin

Before co-founding Datasine, the company's Chief Scientist, James Gin, studied Physics and Machine Learning at Oxford and UCL, and spent years working with large financial datasets and systems. He outlines how marketers can use content preferences to create more effective marketing assets – and how Datasine uses them in Connect.

'Content preferences' is a term that's used in marketing in several different ways for a variety of reasons.

When someone says 'content preferences' they might be talking about what type of content someone prefers to consume more generally, for example, are they more of a reader or a video watcher? They might also be talking about what topics audiences like, whether they like content focused on extreme sports or mindfulness, for example.

At Datasine, we define content in a much more granular way, all the way down to an individual image or sentence. For us, that means content preferences are the very specific elements within that content that users want to engage in marketing assets: what about it motivates them to 'click' – or not. In an image, that might be a particular colour that makes it stand out to them, for example, or the inclusion of flowers if they're a gardening fan. For text, this could be a particular turn of phrase, or a feeling evoked by a sentence.

We gain knowledge into what users' content preferences are by first understanding what features make up the content.



Content preferences - James Gin

What are “content features”?

Content features are essentially all the parts that are present in each piece of content. These are identifiable in any kind of content (images, video, text, etc.), but we’ll be focusing on images for this article.

These features are how we as humans talk about and understand images: what is actually in it (e.g. physical objects) as well as how we perceive what’s going on in the image (e.g. does it seem staged or natural?).

For example, we might identify the following features:

- **This image has trees in it**
- **This image features the colour blue**
- **This image evokes happy feelings**
- **This image features a forest environment**



Some of the features we found present in a marketing image when we ran it through our AI platform, Connect

By identifying content features (a process we at Datasine refer to as semantic content analysis), we’re able to extract and measure these attributes from each piece of content.



Content preferences - James Gin

How a computer understands content features

Computers can be trained to identify these very human judgements using modern tools like machine learning, but it requires a bit of extra work. We first have to collect thousands of human judgements – or labels – on diverse marketing assets with text and images. The types of labels we're interested in, such as whether an image is professional or casual, are informed by surveys with marketers, academic research into brand communication and proprietary research. Once we have these labels, we can use powerful neural network models called convolutional and recurrent networks, to predict human judgements on new content, and these predictions are our features.

How content features can be used to establish content preferences

Once the content features have been extracted, we're able to use them to establish an audience's or an individual's content preferences.

To uncover what the user wants to see, we can analyse whether viewers engaged more when the feature was present or not. That way we can understand what is making people click.

If they engaged every time the image contained nature scenes, for example, they're likely to prefer this kind of imagery in the future. So if you used natural imagery in an ad, that particular user or group of users would be more likely to click because it aligns with their content preferences. On the other hand, if they found lively imagery less engaging, they don't want to see content containing this in the future.

At Datasine, we establish your audience's content preferences using our AI model Connect.



Content preferences - James Gin

How content preferences work in the Pro version of Connect

With Connect's Pro plan, the AI model is trained specifically on the engagement data of your audience. Connect combs through all your previous campaigns to see what features your audience have found more engaging, and offers distinct insights for your brand that will enhance engagement.

The suggestions Connect makes at this level are tailored to your brand, your specific imagery and your tone of voice. It helps you find the most engaging content for your average customer based on the content preferences of that specific group.



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