

# THE TRENDS **SHAPING AFFILIATE MARKETING** IN 2019

*A whistle-stop tour of the trends set to shape affiliate marketing in 2019.*

**By Kevin Edwards**

**Affiliate marketing has always struggled to tell a good story. Seen as a nuts and bolts channel, focused on results rather than the activity that drove the outcome, it often fails to resonate in the way a “hearts-and-minds” brand advertising campaign can.**

With the wider crisis facing digital marketing, be it concerns about ad fraud, wasted budgets, ad blocking or data privacy, 2019 offers a unique opportunity for affiliate marketers to build a compelling, unique narrative.

A key focus in the coming months should be how affiliates are expertly placed to communicate a clear value exchange to consumers. With the need for brands to build transparent and trusted relationships with their customers, they will realize that affiliates have substantial and engaged user bases.

With data privacy laws coming to the fore again in 2019, the desire to ensure consumers are willingly and consensually sharing data with trusted platforms will also aid affiliates. Whether it's through the medium of a coupon code, a cash or points reward, money saving price-comparison sites, or great content, affiliates have created businesses that are loved by consumers, available without cost, and offer a clear, tangible benefit.

2019 will also see a change in tracking upgrades. Moves by Apple, and others, to restrict third-party cookies indicates the general direction. Fuller integrations, however, will future proof sales, as well as offering a boost for brands via additional technology partnerships within affiliate programs expanding both their reach and effectiveness.

A further pressure will come from regulatory bodies. With data privacy continuing to shape the agenda elsewhere, it's likely the industry will need to take a more collaborative approach to topics such as affiliate disclosure.

The rise of the influencer and the desire to assimilate these budgets within affiliate programs means brands will demand a clearer, ethical standpoint from networks as industry gatekeepers.

Measuring the success of influencer campaigns and other elements of an affiliate program will present a dichotomy in our new data conscious era. While the narrative for a decade has been to capture more and more data, the focus will shift towards storing selective information that has been respectfully collected.

Ensuring robust processes are in place to protect and anonymize the data will also become increasingly important. This will be critical as the desire to understand the longer-term value delivered by affiliate marketing and the need to drive increased quality will be front of mind for many advertisers.

While the digital squeeze may be occurring from all sides; consumers, brands, and regulators, affiliate marketing has an opportunity in 2019 to build a case for increased budgets and greater engagement.

The key to unlocking this may lie with affiliates themselves. By telling the stories of how they built retail brands that connect and resonate with millions of consumers through creative and quirky campaigns, we will all be better placed to help further cement the affiliate channel in its rightful place at the heart of the marketing mainstream. **[FF]**

