



























What to Watch for in 2018

A  Amazon	B  Binge-watching	C  Color Enhanced Lenses	D  Digital Eye Strain	E  Experience	F  Feminism
G  Geometric	H  Harry Potter	I  Independent Business	J  Juggle	K  Kiosk	L  Lace
M  Myopia	N  National Sunglasses Day	O  Oceans 8	P  Purpose	Q  'Queer Eye For The Straight Guy'	R  Royal Wedding
S  Social Media	T  Telehealth	U  Ultra Violet	V  Virtual Reality	W  'workSMART'	X  The X-Files Returns
Y  YouTube	Z  Generation Z	An A to Z Guide			

Here at VM, we recognize that keeping up with optical and vision care market trends are enough of a challenge, as the demands of the day-to-day tend to loom large for many of us.

Anticipating trends, though, is the true business advantage in today's world. It's critical to determine some top line goals from these for your own business and devise ways to capitalize on them.

Particularly after such a dynamic year as 2017, anticipating and planning takes on new urgency. Our team here feels the changes, moving at lightning speed, driven by the revolution in the digital realm that's now a part of our business, cultural and personal lives

Customer groups are not all alike. Which ones are your strong suit and strongest base? Anticipating how their attitudes, service expectations and

product interests are changing—or not changing—should guide your product choices, presentation focus and team setups.

"Social media" is now, we declare, "media"—your messages and the way you present your business, its identity and outreach and expertise via social media platforms will be critical to your business in 2018.

2018 is likely, too, to bring more deals and consolidation. The private equity funds that are driving change within all businesses and sectors of health care, retail and supply are reshaping the vision care space, too. This is happening for companies positioned at various tiers of the market from the value segment to premium.

Next year, we will learn more about the pending Essilor-Luxottica combination, about the potential CVS-Aetna merger, possible additional IPOs (Na-

tional Vision took that route successfully last year), the growth of other optometric business platforms in the U.S., the pace and definition of practice transition, the next steps for licensing and brands and the suppliers/developers of those.

We know that the critically important independent ECP market will remain strong—for those who take a proactive and business management stance toward their vision care practices.

So, take a look at our A to Z choices. Of course, please let us know if you feel we left out any others that are important to you. ■

—The VM Editorial Team: Marge Axelrad, Mary Kane, Andrew Karp, Mark Tosh, Jamie Wilson, Stephanie Sengwe, Jonathan Klemstine and Joe Bowen.

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You are here.

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A



Amazon

The “Amazon” effect will continue to impact customers’ expectations about delivery, service and price. Optical ECPs and retailers are likely to address questions about turnaround time, waits for special orders and convenience.

Athleisure

Fashion’s take on the performance market will continue to appeal to men, women and kids who are into healthy activities and also want to look good. A definite opportunity for eyewear and sunwear, especially those with performance features.

B



Binge-Watching

Sure, it’s fun to watch 12 episodes of your favorite show in one sitting, but what are the short-term or long-term effects on our eyes? What does sitting in front of a TV or computer for hours do to our vision? Be prepared to talk about the impact and solutions for digital eye strain.

Bold

Strong shapes, wide gauge materials and assertive colors mark a new breed of eyeglass frames. Could be geometrics, rectangles or peaked edges or even rounds. Look for thicker-gauge plastics and metals.

Brick and Click

Retailers that combine the best elements of brick-and-mortar retailing—being able to feel the merchandise and get personalized sales help and doctor’s care—with the ease and convenience of online shopping 24/7 will have distinct advantages over competitors who only operate in one realm or the other.

C



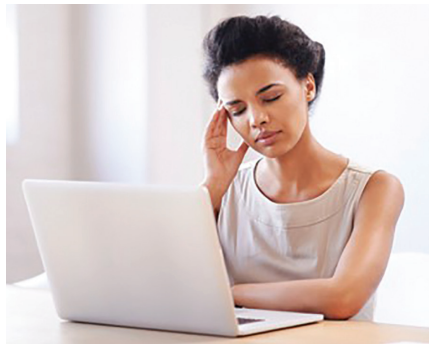
Color Enhancing Lenses

This exciting new category of sun lenses makes colors appear more vivid. In the image above, Ray-Ban Chromance draws inspiration from travel bloggers, highlighting the visual effects of vibrant colors seen around the world.

Consolidation

Combinations of companies will continue. On both the supplier side and the delivery (retailer, ECP) sides of the business.

D



Digital Eye Strain

As technology continues to grow and we spend more and more time looking at screens, education on digital eye strain is increasing.

Drones

These small, flying crafts seem to be everywhere these days, from the battlefield to the retail arena. Look for drones to play an even bigger role in the delivery of goods and services in 2018.



Dry Eye

Broader awareness of this widespread, potentially debilitating condition has led to more research, new treatments and product solutions. More ECPs are seeing the advantages of emphasizing their expertise in identifying and treating this condition. Jennifer Aniston is featured above in the Eyelove TV commercial, for Shire Ophthalmics’ “Dry Eye” awareness.

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E



Experience

The watchword for consumer and patient is experiences as consumers are expecting real connections and services from brands and businesses.

F



Feminism

The word “feminism” was heralded as Merriam-Webster dictionary’s word of the year for 2017, and the term was the most looked-up word in its online dictionary. Such issues as harassment, equal pay and opportunity for women will continue to have increased visibility in 2018, as will the #MeToo Movement which empowered women to share their experiences of sexual assault and harassment.



Floral Embroidery

This vintage trend made a comeback this past spring, putting a twist to the floral looks that usually emerge as we head into the warmer temperatures.

G



Geometric

Geometric shapes have been getting more and more exposure with many sun and optical looks taking inspiration from hexagons and octagons.

H



Harry Potter

The adventurous, imaginative world of the boy with the wire-rim glasses is coming to Broadway. Based on an original new story by J.K. Rowling, Jack Thorne and John Tiffany, “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” is a new play by Jack Thorne, directed by John Tiffany. The production is one play presented in two parts. Both parts are intended to be seen in order on the same day (matinée and evening) or on consecutive evenings. Seven lead members of the original West End company of “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” are set to reprise their roles on Broadway when preview performances begin at the Lyric Theatre in March. The official opening at the renovated theater is slated for April 22, 2018.

High Energy Visible Light

Look for more products that protect eyes from the harmful effects of HEV light, and more programs to help ECPs communicate with patients about it.

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I



Independent Business

A growing number of independent ECPs are the go-to for their local communities and demographics. They connect to their customers through trunks shows, special events and social media. Many consumers are continuing to embrace the ideas of supporting Optical on Main Street. In the same way that big box retailers have Black Friday, independent businesses celebrate Small Business Saturday, a day that encourages consumers to shop locally.

Influencers

Companies are now using the power of influencers via social media campaigns/ marketing to attract a digitally savvy customer.



Industry 4.0

The Internet of Things has come to the manufacturing world, enabling us to get real-time data from sensor-embedded equipment. A growing number of optical labs are already benefitting from this tech trend and more will soon follow.

J



Juggle

These days, everyone seems to be busier than ever. To achieve quality of life we must juggle work and play in imaginative new ways.

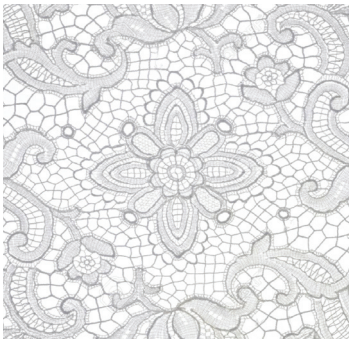
K



Kiosks

Telehealth is enabling consumers to access medical services without having to visit a doctor's office or hospital. Kiosks, now powered with digital capabilities and connections, can be centrally located, often in shopping malls or even other retailers' host environments. They provide immediate help in the form of a video consultation for walk-in consumers who need to connect with a doctor or other health care providers.

L



Lace

A continuing style trend emphasizing the delicate (white and ivory) and the funky (garnet and black). Eyewear specialists are likely to utilize the look.

M



Made in America

Frame companies such as State Optical Co. (I) based in Chicago and Lowercase, based in Brooklyn, are getting back to their U.S. roots by manufacturing Made in America products.

Mobile Eye Tests

New types of autorefractors, including some aimed at consumers, are enabling visual acuity tests to be performed anywhere, anytime. These devices are giving doctors more flexibility in scheduling patients and allowing them to serve people in distant locations, while consumers are using them to monitor their own eyesight.



Myopia

Near-sightedness is reaching epidemic proportions, as a large percentage of people worldwide are experiencing deteriorating vision, driven in part by their increasing use of digital devices with screens. New initiatives by the Brien Holden Vision Institute and other leading organizations aim to slow myopia's progression, particularly in children.

More →

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N



National Sunglasses Day

The annual early summer campaign, taking place on June 27, celebrates the importance of wearing shades to protect the eyes from the sun's harsh ultraviolet (UV) rays, and reaches millions of people each year.

O



Ocean's 8

The movie, featuring an all-star glam cast of women, including Sandra Bullock, Cate Blanchett, Anne Hathaway, Sarah Paulson and Mindy Kaling, opens in June. The film directly hit the fashion scene, featuring a slew of influential wardrobe and sunglass interpretations as its characters attempt "to pull off the heist of the century" at New York City's star-studded annual Met Gala.

Olympic Winter Games

The Winter Games open on Feb. 8 in Seoul. The best athletes from around the world will compete. And, performance sunwear and goggles will likely gain major media visibility throughout the games.

Online Vision Tests

One of the most hotly disputed areas of vision care, online vision tests are popular with consumers, even as they come under fire from the optometry establishment. They are a part of the telemedicine trend, which is growing throughout health care.

Optometric Alliances

Many optometrists appreciate the benefits of belonging to an optometric alliance. As more of these OD groups are acquired by major suppliers, their influence is growing, along with their membership.

P

Pastels

Is this a micro-trend in eyewear colors? Springtime brings a fresh take on frosty blue, pale pink or blush and ivory.

Private Equity

The deal making is likely to continue, with impact in the optical retail, ECP and supplier sectors, creating new business structures and competition.



Purpose

Consumers are gravitating more and more toward brands they know go beyond just selling product. They want to be associated with companies that give back to special causes in some way.

Q



'Queer Eye for The Straight Guy' Returns

In February, Netflix has a new Fab Five that will forge relationships with men and women from a wide array of backgrounds and beliefs often contrary to their own.

R

RFID Chips

These tiny electronic components are increasingly being used by retailers and manufacturers that need location data from the products they are selling or producing.



Royal Wedding

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's fairy tale wedding is set for May 19. The much-anticipated event will garner mega media and social media attention for the ceremony, the who's who guest list and last but not least "what-will-they-all-wear?"

More —>

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S



Social Media

As a tool not just for self-promotion but as a way for businesses to align themselves with consumers via campaigns, and for ECPs to provide educational information beyond the exam room.

Subscription Services

What effect will online subscription services, such as Hubble and Sightbox, have on traditional optical businesses that rely on sales of contact lenses?

Supply Chain

Service is the key differentiator in today's economy, and managing a supply chain effectively, whether it's global, national or regional, is essential to the success of any service business today.

T

Telehealth

The advent of remote and mobile diagnostics is changing the face of all health care specialties. Among vision care specialists, co-management of patients' eye disease, pre-and-post-op treatment is starting to increase. Watch this space.

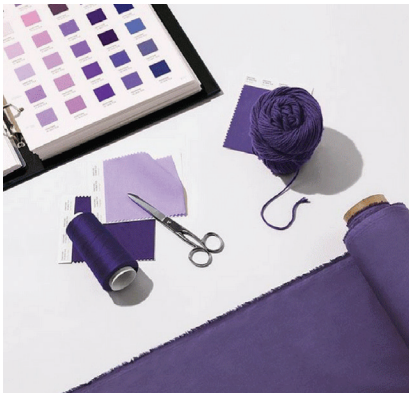
Tints

Color tinted lenses are back on the fashion scene. Along with the more iconic yellow/orange hued lenses, sun frames are taking this up a notch featuring rose, purple, green and blue colored and flash-tinted lenses. Performance tints go beyond fashion to achieve functional vision improvement, too.

Transparency

Consumers are increasingly interested in doing business with companies that exhibit a clear message about what they do, from product choices to pricing to policies.

U



Ultra Violet

The Pantone Color Institute has dubbed Ultra Violet as the 2018 color of the year. This hue is "a dramatically provocative and thoughtful purple shade. PANTONE 18-3838 Ultra Violet communicates originality, ingenuity and visionary thinking that points us toward the future," the Institute said.

Uncorrected Refractive Error (URE)

People with poor vision could contribute billions of dollars to the global economy, if they only had access to an eye exam and a pair of glasses. Awareness of this critical issue is growing and many vision organizations around the world are working to reduce this widespread problem.

V

Vintage Revival

Whether inspired by a specific period in time or a revival of a classic style, the growing passion for vintage is back and frame companies are taking notice. Vintage looks offer choices that aren't always on the mainstream shelves. Could be 80s or 90s, but what's old is new again for many customers.



Virtual Reality

This powerful technology, which uses special goggles to create an immersive visual environment with a full field of view, is changing the way we experience movies, games, sports and concerts. More sophisticated VR systems include a dioptric adjustment for sharp vision.

W

workSMART
Leadership Tactics for Transformative Times

'workSMART'

In today's fast-changing and fluid business world, leaders must help their companies pivot quickly as market conditions shift. Come to VM's 2018 Global Leadership Summit to learn tactics that enable you to work smart and stay ahead of competition. The program is "workSMART: Leadership Tactics for Transformative Times" at the Times Center on March 14.

Wellness

Wellness has become a major lifestyle trend for consumers. From trendy fitness classes and workout clothes (think Athleisure) to super foods and all-natural products there's a continuing consciousness surrounding health.

X

eXpo East and West

That's Vision Expo. The optical community will come together in Spring and Fall to network, compare notes about products and trends, and expand our CE horizons. Save these dates: March 15 to 18 at New York's Javits Center and Sept. 26 to 29 at The Sands in Las Vegas.



The 'X-FILES' Returns

January 3: Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny returned to their iconic roles of Dana Scully and Fox Mulder in the six-episode event series on Fox.

Y

YouTube

Online video will continue to play a role in providing product and "how to" information to consumers, especially as new technology for eye exams becomes more pervasive.

Z

Generation Z

The generation after Millennials, this is the first demographic to grow up completely in the age of the internet. This generation is also characterized as being one of the most informed generations.

ZZZZZZZZ

The importance of sleep will continue to be the elephant in the room. We all know we need more and better sleep, but no one wants to talk about it. Getting a good night's sleep affects brain power, job performance and it helps fuel our systems to get us through the day in one piece. The temptation to always be connected to our devices and that bad Blue Light will continue to derail us from enjoying the scientifically proven benefits of getting enough sleep.