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Marketing and social media trends in CRE, 2015

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Happy New Year! With each new year, it's time to predict the future - in my case, the future of marketing and social media in the commercial real estate industry in 2015. As Forbes notes, "We're in the midst of a visual culture shift that will undoubtedly accelerate in 2015," and I have to agree. Based on my experience and research, below are my predictions:

Clicks & Mortar - Omni-channel remains present in 2015 as retailers will need to be able to cross-channel sales between online sales, bricks and mortar, brochures, social media and other ways. We'll see even more online retailers go from online to bricks and mortar. Although, many may start as pop-ups, like the new shop Boutikey in The Fenway in Boston on Boylston St.

Grocery Gets Social and Luxe - At the Colliers International Annual Seminar on January 15th in Boston, Theodore Chryssikas, executive VP at Colliers, mentioned the new Whole Foods South End spa, Milk & Honey. Yes, Whole Foods has a spa and has received the ultimate customer service award; now offering pedicures, hot shaves, shoe shines and a juice bar for your enjoyment in between buying avocados and salmon. The spa also has a designated 110-space parking lot for your convenience. Milk & Honey offers online booking and has a full line-up of social sites including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and Google+. Whole Foods also follows up on any comment posted on an online article about them and is notorious for rapid-fire reply tweets to customers. Grocery stores have been blowing me away with their online integration and social media engagement. On a smaller scale, look at Snap Top Market in the South End of Boston. Owner, Steve Napoli grew his business by offering the delivery of produce and other items via online ordering. With grocery stores and markets like these having such heightened customer service, online integration, social engagement, community involvement and high-quality products, others will need to step up or ship out.

Instagram Grows, Facebook Slows - When the baby boomers exploded onto Facebook, many Millennials fled. I've seen a bigger trend with this demographic in the last year on Instagram and foresee this remaining a place they'll spend ample time. Retailers will continue to utilize hashtags and create their own to engage with consumers and increase sales. With tools like "Like2Buy," Instagram is transformed from simply a feed of images, to a gallery of products. Check out LOFT, Nordstrom, Williams-Sonoma or Forever 21 to see examples. Smaller retailers will display products but also be transparent in showing the store Owner and moments of his or her life to build connections. A good example here is the Austin-based jewelry store, Kendra Scott. This company grew their Instagram followers from 4,000 to 94,000 in one year, impressive.

Drone Videography - With companies like lcp360, offering services including photography, custom virtual tours, 3D architectural visualizations and Google Places Page management, it's no surprise that they would soon offer drone videography. I see drones playing a big role this year in taking property photography and videography, especially for companies that have a diverse geographical

portfolio.

Ads and Apps - You may be scrolling through one of your social feeds and realize you're not familiar with one of the posts, these are sponsored posts. Almost every social network now has sponsored posts, articles, tweets or hashtags, it seems to be inevitable. I think we'll see even more of this in 2015 but I'm not sure how much is too much just yet.

LinkedIn or Bust - Now with 300 million users, LinkedIn has truly become the ultimate social tool for business networking and I see this number continuing to grow in 2015. Many social sites boast their user number but have countless in-active users. I believe LinkedIn has a high activity rate. Every time I'm at a networking event, everyone knows exactly what I'm up to and mentions that my posts dominate their feeds, and I only post 1-2 times a day! Every generation in the workforce is represented on this engaging site.

Social Media Fun Fact: Poor George Gray, the announcer of the Price is Right had 1.1k shares on social media of his recent spill trying to jog backwards on a treadmill, ouch.

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