

ISBA

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2024 ISBA Partner Predictions

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The ascent of generative AI

Alchemists

By Vlad Komanicky, Founder, Alchemists

At Alchemists, our focus for 2024 zeroes in on a singular megatrend: the ascent of Generative AI and its role in boosting marketing productivity – both from internal and external viewpoints. As there's a plethora of information on this subject, unsurprisingly, much is generic or, at worst, misleading. It's our mission to demystify the real capabilities of AI for our clients, identifying it as our central theme for the year ahead.

Currently, we find ourselves at the start of an extraordinary journey. Generative AI is on the cusp of enabling the instantaneous creation of both still and moving images. This advancement will empower marketers to produce captivating, personalised visual content swiftly and at scale, as well as to instantly translate and transcreate content across various languages.

Throughout 2024, Alchemists is committed to in-depth exploration and consultancy on AI, offering detailed insights for those keen to delve deeper into this technology.

We also anticipate a more integrated across creative, media, and digital ecosystems, a trend underscored by the recent flurry of activity in the last quarter. Notably, sustainability in marketing is set to gain significant traction, moving beyond token gestures to become a fundamental practice.

In-housing will remain a hot topic, capturing the attention of numerous marketers. We expect this trend to intensify in the coming year, as more organisations embrace it.

Alchemists will continue to lead discussions and provide expert consultancy on these evolving themes, guiding our clients through a rapidly transforming landscape.

The importance of strategic input and upskilling

apprais

The debate around the most effective use of AI will continue to focus on 2 diverse potential benefits; improving efficiency and increasing effectiveness.

At the same time, one of the biggest creative challenges is cut through at a time when consumers are increasingly multi-tasking, even though around two-thirds of social media is consumed silently. This underlines the importance of strategic input, identifying key consumer insights, as the driving force behind groundbreaking ideas and their ability to grab the attention.

Given the proliferation of processes and companies supplying them, clients and agencies may need to upskill to effectively navigate the opportunities to ensure the best fit.

This might also have a knock-on impact on the cost of agency resources as most recently seen when digital specialists were in relatively short supply.

By Beth Lewis, Head of Client Services, Aprais

The year for future proofing your production ecosystem



CLAIRE
RANDALL
CONSULTING

By Claire Randall, CEO & Founder, Claire Randall Consulting

This year conversations continued around many areas of production from technology to sustainability. The primary challenge for marketers, we suggest, is prioritising each of these topics and understanding where to start in addressing them.

New technologies (AI in particular) got a lot of airtime but we have seen very few brands yet adopt AI for anything other than as a creative aid. There will continue to be plenty of opportunity for AI to really boost automation, versioning and delivery and this means a brand's production strategy and framework needs to be clearly thought through to avoid errors on a mass scale. Likewise, controls around usage rights management and DE&I will need to be put in place – a good DAM will become even more critical.

We're seeing more uptake in virtual production which is helping the sustainability agenda and addressing various logistical challenges. However overseas shoots still seem popular!

The dominance of platforms over terrestrial media channels means more content options but also the need to keep control/visibility of costs. More fragmented media schedules means a greater need for transparency.

In 2024 it is imperative that brands start by looking at their existing production ecosystems, tech and partners and understand what is fit for the future and what isn't. The time spent now will only ensure that your production ecosystem can evolve in the right way over time, as opposed to becoming an unworkable mix.

Retail Media: The Race for Resilience and Revenue in 2024



By Robert Webster, VP of Strategy & Innovation at CvE.

It doesn't take Nostradamus to predict that Retail Media will continue to grow next year— and grow it will with continued rapid advances in revenue.

What is less well understood is how much of retail media today is built of sand with sticky tape and cardboard. For many retailers, their RMN networks have not delivered the promised revenues yet, and operational and technical challenges proliferate.

For retail media to grow as it should, it needs to really up its game. This will be a big trend in 2024 as the pressures of growth and the loss of the cookie put a lot of strain on existing structures. The rush to launch in retail media will now become a race to build long-term scalable businesses that deliver on the promise to retailers and brands alike. This will become an article of its own, so I hope this preview into the themes of a structural rebirth whet the appetite for more to come.

Another big area will be around joint funding and cooperative buying, where ad budgets are partly paid for by a brand and the media owner. This can turbocharge strategic importance for brands and revenues for retailers but also needs a big evolution.

Experiment and innovate

ebiquity

By Nick Waters, Group CEO, Ebiquity

Here are three media trends for 2024 that advertisers should use to drive presence and enhance business performance.

1. Retail media gathers momentum and is set to double and reach \$110bn by 2027. Retail media is fuel in the tank and the lever for significant growth in ecommerce in the U.S. and beyond.
2. TikTok is building an Amazon-like flywheel across advertising, commerce, and media. The combination of TikTok ads, shop, and the For You -page – powered by TikTok’s creator content – will make it the fast-growing digital ad business in 2024 after Walmart.
3. Influencer marketing will be more resilient than social ad spend. More than \$2bn will be invested on Instagram in 2024; \$1bn each for TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook.

The year ahead offers many opportunities for brands to experiment and innovate in emerging media formats and new avenues to reach attentive audiences.

2024: a year of measurement and analytics reckonings

Ekimetrics.

By Matt Andrew, UK GM & Partner, Ekimetrics

Marketing and their finance teams will need to find new ways to communicate. Attribution may have been easy to understand (if flawed), but now in its death throes, it really is time for brands to get to grips with more holistic approaches to measurement. Or face returning to decisions – by all parties – driven more by instinct than data.

Similarly, where one-to-one personalisation through SaaS providers has been a marketing staple, brands that are lacking more rounded customer strategies will be exposed by the rise of contextual marketing as it fills the post-cookie void. The need for more strategic approaches to customer understanding will become acute. Brands on the front foot stand to make the best gains.

Finally, industrialised and valuable use cases for Generative AI will become more commonplace. But brands must exercise strong human control, especially those caught in the clamour to catch up.

2024: Measurement remains the main priority



By Alex Tait, Founder, Entropy

Many of the challenges we faced in 2023 will continue into 2024. When I was client side, I chaired ISBA's Digital group for 5 years. Measurement was the main priority of members in almost every annual survey. If we were to run a similar survey this year, I'd expect a similar result.

Clients will continue to grapple with well documented challenges such as: the transition to GA4; and the phasing out of the 3P cookie. Whilst also needing to develop best practice for the measurement of rapidly growing paid channels such as Retail Media and PMax.

We should support and applaud industry efforts such as project Origin to measure and standardise audience delivery data. Smart advertisers will also look to leverage these data as inputs into analysis to understand the impact on business outcomes (critical as economic turbulence continues). I predict that we will see a greater demand by advertisers for the right data to be used as inputs into their models, such as the Entropy & Outsmart OOH data standard. Only by combining the right inputs with the right measurement solutions can we understand the TRUE impact of the media plan.

Demonstrate the effectiveness of your creative and media investments



Marketing Contract Compliance

By Adrian Jenkins, Founder & Director, Financial Progression

With 2024 an election year in both the UK and US, and businesses and consumers facing continued economic challenges, the year ahead is uncertain. Accordingly, the “data and fact” attracts more attention, particularly from CFOs.

We expect to see CMOs investing more in marketing mix modelling in order to target their budgets more effectively. In addition, they will challenge their creative and media agencies to provide more regular and insightful reporting to enable the rapid assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of those investments.

The key theme for 2024 will, however, be Generative AI. Most advertisers will want their agencies to use it, and yet ensure they do so in a controlled environment that minimises risk to their brand equity. Accordingly, advertisers will create supplier policies regarding its use that they will embed into their commercial agreements with agencies of all disciplines.

2024 and the deprecation of third-party cookies

The logo for ID COMMS is a yellow semi-circle with the text "ID COMMS" in a dark blue, sans-serif font centered within it.

ID COMMS

By Susy Pyzer-Knapp, Consultant, ID Comms

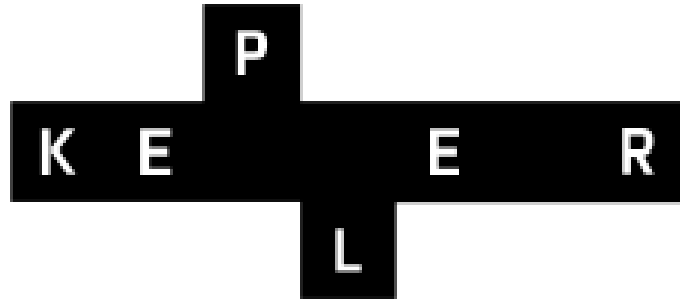
In 2024, the digital marketing landscape is poised for significant shifts, with one of the foremost challenges being the potential deprecation of third-party cookies.

This poses a substantial hurdle in the realm of targeted advertising, as advertisers grapple with the limitations of not being able to track user behaviour across websites. The absence of this vital tool impedes the creation of personalized and targeted campaigns, presenting difficulties in understanding and reaching specific audience segments. Moreover, the depreciation of third-party cookies complicates the measurement of campaign effectiveness, making it challenging for advertisers to attribute conversions and assess the true impact of their digital advertising efforts.

Concurrently, the rise of retail networks, marked by the prevalence of walled gardens, is fundamentally reshaping the digital advertising landscape. The dominance of these retail networks introduces complexities in obtaining cross-platform insights, making it increasingly difficult for advertisers to orchestrate cohesive and integrated marketing strategies across diverse online channels.

As the industry navigates these challenges, innovative solutions and adaptive strategies will become paramount for success in the ever-evolving digital marketing landscape of 2024.

An industry reshaping



By Martin Kelly, EMEA & APAC CEO, Kepler

It's been a year of contagious uncertainty in the ad market.

Media spend has always been the canary in the coal mine for larger economic uncertainty and budgets definitely suffered as a result. But look a bit deeper and you see an industry reshaping under the surface, coming out leaner and future-facing.

Performance-focused, AI driven products have thrived with Google Performance Max and Meta Advantage + taking an increasing share of the market as advertisers look for results in uncertain times, but also creating a new wave of brand safety concerns.

Two more powerful ecosystems have accelerated into view with Tik Tok delivering outsize growth and retailers looking to monetise data assets and bolster the bottom line through Retail Media Networks.

As the macro economic clouds lift for 2024 advertisers are planning with more certainty and optimism, you can see an industry poised for growth, emerging from the gloom in a different shape.

A difficult year for brands

LEAD

By Jerney Leonard, CEO, LEAD

We're predicting a difficult year for brands in 2024.

Marketing budgets are already being slashed, the phasing out of cookies will be completed and consumer spending is already down year on year.

Where we think successful marketers will focus their efforts this year will be in three key areas.

1. **Overheads** – reduce costs through greater automation and consolidate vendors to deliver economies of scale (the opportunity here is for full-service agencies to take back the delivery of services that have won off them by smaller specialist agencies).
2. **Performance** – strong focus on channels and measurement to drive more efficient ROI of marketing spend (brands will be looking at where they can reduce the reliance on expensive channels such as Google and Meta).
3. **Data** – a significant effort to improve and utilise the first party data brands collect and use (the opportunity here is for partners that can deliver greater RPU for brands utilising their first party data).

The changing role of creatives



By Jon Biggs, Executive Creative Director, Media.Monks

The way digital marketing partners can sell creativity has changed immensely. Why?

The nature of creativity has changed, a shift that's accelerated by AI. The technology enables today's creative teams to deliver numerous assets, as the biggest prohibitor—cost—is (essentially) gone. This move from minimalism to maximalism means we can finally deliver on the whole promise of digital advertising: create timely, truly personal and very effective experiences.

We're also given the opportunity to reimagine our value proposition. What's the role of creatives in this changing environment?

I predict AI will change our approach to creativity, as we'll spend more time prompting, creative concepting and refining assets than building them. We'll continue to use creativity to solve problems for brands, but what's asked will look different. As a partner to brands, we'll provide solutions rather than "a set of deliverables." With creatives applying their craft talent to define pipelines for top-notch outcomes, we'll deliver holistic work that's even more tech-driven.

Speed + Integration



MediaSense®

By Ryan Kangisser, Managing Partner, MediaSense

Our 2023 study into the [future of agency models](#) was illuminating in signalling the gap in expectations (vs reality) by advertisers around their desire for speed and integration.

Despite advances in automation & AI, and the increasingly blurred lines between the various marketing touchpoints, advertisers are feeling ill-equipped to meet the needs of their customers through relevant and timely communications. Just 1 in 10 advertisers surveyed in this study felt their current agency model was fit for their future requirements and we expect 2024 will see a much greater focus on better aligning agency models and ways of working to advertisers' requirements.

Automation will be an obvious area to prioritise to remove redundant or inefficient tasks but this shouldn't be seen as a panacea; technology plus integration (media, creative, data, technology) will be the critical formula to crack in 2024, ensuring internal & external teams are working seamlessly together in the pursuit of the best customer experience.

Relative economic stability



At PwC, our lead advisors on economics and politics are predicting a relatively stable 2024 for the UK, at least compared with the first few years of this decade!

Low economic growth, but at least not a recession; no dramatic policy swerves in the government's final year; perhaps even a Culture Secretary who remains in post until the election. This relative stability should be helpful for business generally and advertising specifically.

But of course 2024 could then be upended by the US presidential elections at the end of the year...

By Sam Tomlinson, PwC Media Leader

True personalisation

tag.

By Joe Holmes, Head of Business Development, EMEA, Tag

Until now, personalisation has been based on generic audience mapping, with brands using data to make broad assumptions. The challenge for marketers lies in reaching that specific customer, delivering the message they want and need in that moment, and relating that back to the brand's offering.

Accessing insights based on how content and campaigns are performing has long been possible but tapping into that next level of insight – knowing whether the customer clicked or made a purchase – has proved elusive. Until now.

True personalisation a reality, as Marketeers begin to connect media insights with production – a seismic development which underpins Tag's recent integration into the Dentsu agency network.

By bringing media and production together, a common taxonomy of all available assets can be created, enabling tracking, measurement, and informing future content.

Continuous feedback empowers brands to move faster and be smarter, informing the next campaign with real-life insights, facilitating execution at scale.

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