WPROMOTE

Forecast

10 Predictions
About the Future
of Media &
Marketing



# A Wave of Media Change Is Coming

Multiple trends across the media landscape are coalescing into a massive wave of changes that will impact every brand and business that relies on any kind of marketing to get in front of consumers.

These forces are changing everything from our day-to-day jobs to the industry as a whole: the fast-moving rise of Al and automation, the consumer quest for authenticity, data deprecation and privacy, and more.

The prognosis: short-term thinking will become synonymous with long-term failure.

You need to start accounting for these seismic shifts in your planning right now because they are already changing the game in fundamental ways as the funnel continues to collapse, platforms and technology change, and consumers demand ever more from the brands they interact with.

That's why we've dug into the data, explored all of the possibilities with our experts, and pinpointed ten predictions that should not just inform but drive your media strategy and planning from 2024 through 2026 and beyond.

It's time to get prepared for what's next in the world of media.



Christine Schrader
Head of Content
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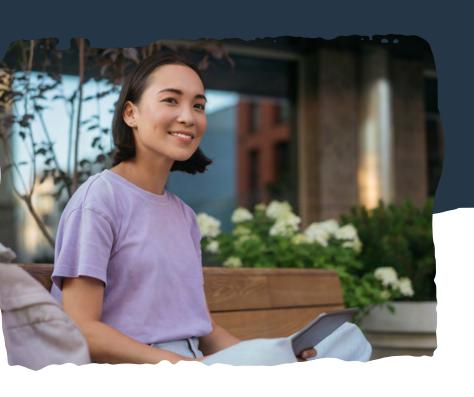
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# Paid media will become synonymous with automation and Al



Paid media of every stripe will be powered by AI, letting machine learning do what it does best: try out more combinations and permutations across ad types than any human could ever do while adjusting bidding to maximize impact against key goals like efficiency.

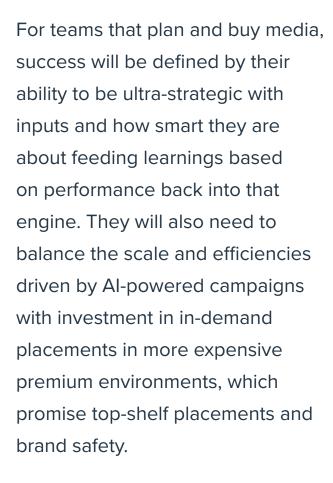
According to Ascend2, paid media is driving the biggest increases in automation, with nearly 40% of marketers reporting they're leveraging automation for paid ads in 2023 vs. 26% in 2022. That's only going to increase as major platforms like Google and Meta lean into Al through campaign types like Performance Max and Advantage+, respectively. Al-scaled placements offer more potential for driving down costs but give advertisers less control over their ads and the context in which they're appearing.

### WHERE BRANDS ARE LEVERAGING AUTOMATION



Source: Ascend2





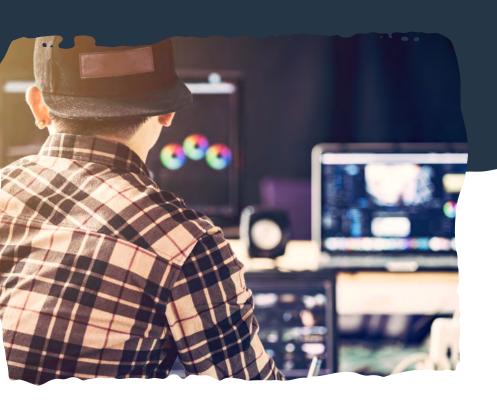
The rise of AI won't be limited to traditional "performance marketing" channels. A study by Google found that more than 50% of leading performance agencies shifted more than 30% of their time to more strategic activities thanks to machine learning. Profitminded businesses will look for similar levels of accountability ever earlier in the customer journey, accelerating the so-called collapse of the marketing funnel.



- ✓ Don't be scared of Al and automation: lean into testing to understand how it can unlock efficiencies and drive scale and seize the early adopter advantage.
- ✓ Find the right strategic balance to keep costs down and maximize performance: look for new opportunities to claw back and maximize efficiencies on digital channels, particularly as automationpowered ad types expand and show more impressive returns.
- ✓ Keep Al accountable: make sure you're deploying plenty of human oversight to both the inputs and the outputs to avoid making a million-dollar mistake or breaking faith with customers.



# Creative will emerge as the ultimate performance media unlock



### HIGH EXPECTATIONS: WHAT TODAY'S CONSUMERS WANT FROM BRANDS

Be positive contributors to society			72%	
Connect with their consumers		64%		
Use their power to help people		64%		
Bring people together toward a common goa	l 49%			
Raise the moral standard for others	48%			
Unite people from different backgrounds	46%			
Act as leaders in our society	43%			

Source: Sprout Social

There are two major components of any marketing strategy that too many brands have outsourced to algorithms or meaningfully lost sight of in the current optimization-led landscape: relevance and resonance.

The combination of an increasingly marketingsavvy (or even skeptical) consumer interacting with brands and ads across many channels and the rise of privacy restrictions will act as a forcing function for brands who have lost sight of the importance of audience connection in their strategies. But even Meta has acknowledged that the continued deprecation of data means that targeting cannot just be about audience anymore. The answer is a paradigm shift to creative-led marketing, but it won't be creative marketing as we knew it from the 1960s.

Consumers are hungry to engage in more than just transactional relationships with brands, looking for ads that speak the native languages of their communities and authentically align with their interests and values.



content that is actually creative, whether that's by offering a new perspective, eliciting a feeling, incorporating interactivity, or introducing something completely unexpected.

Research done by Kantar and Paul

Dyson shows that creative quality can multiply your profits up to 12 times. In 2023, you simply can't afford to let your creative quality fall to the wayside.

Brands will need to shift investment to

The best of the best will obliterate the false silos between performance and creativity, engaging in creative decision-making powered by data while opening the door to the experimentation necessary to stand out in an extremely crowded market and lean into Al capabilities that enable scale.

#### THE TOP 10 DRIVERS OF ADVERTISING PROFITABILITY

Rank	Factor	Profitability Multiplier
1	Brand Size	18
2	Creative quality	12
3	Budget setting across geographies	5
4	Budget setting across portfolios	3
5	Multimedia	2.5
6	Budget setting across variants	1.7
7	Cost/product seasonality	1.6
8	Brand v Product v Season	1.4
9	Laydown/Phasing	1.15
10	Target Audience	1.1

Source: Kantar



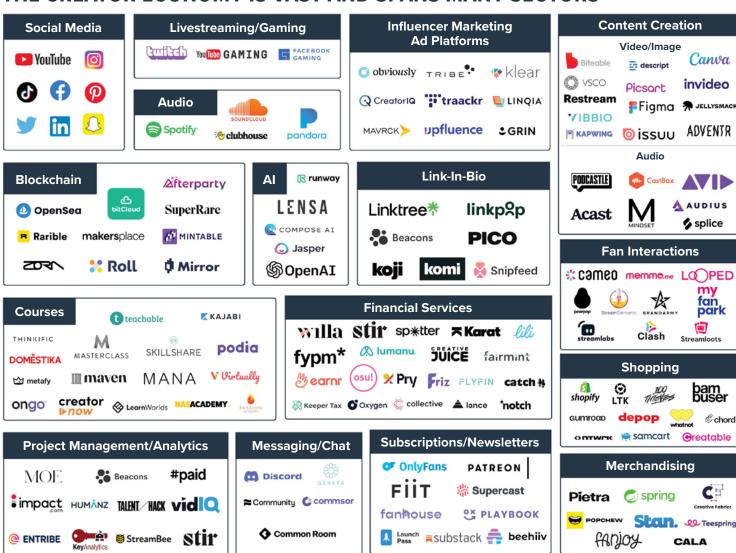
- ✓ Dig deep and learn the lexicon of your audience, their specific culture, and what matters to them: take risks with creative and creator partnerships to drive connections with specific audiences on different platforms.
- ✓ Take the time to listen: dig into what your audience is actually saying and responding to beyond engagement metrics through social listening, focus groups, or surveys.
- ✓ Use generative AI as a starting point if you're in a creative rut: use the tech to input what you know about the audience and what you need to achieve for your ads and get new ideas for content, social copy, images, videos, songs, or 3D models.



# Community-building social will lead to creator-powered marketing across channels



#### THE CREATOR ECONOMY IS VAST AND SPANS MANY SECTORS



Source: eMarkete

People trust people, and they want to feel confident about the things they're spending money on. Social media has evolved from a place to connect with people you look up to or already know to the way people find, establish, and develop new communities around mutual interests and shared culture.

These communities develop their own language, jokes, and stories—and brands

are already finding ways to plug in and connect. As avatars of and experts in those communities, creators have become more dominant in the discovery process and a critical factor in the purchase decision. In fact, Salsify found that 46% of US consumers will pay more to buy from a brand they trust.



## COMMUNITY-BUILDING SOCIAL WILL LEAD TO CREATOR-POWERED MARKETING ACROSS CHANNELS

Creative is no longer the sole purview of the brand itself, it's collaborative and based on authenticity, especially for younger consumers; the people a brand works with and the voices speaking for the brand will be as important to strategy and success as the products brands are marketing.

Although social is at the forefront of this trend, it won't end there; creator-driven capabilities are already showing up in TV ad buys, on Amazon, and more. Leaning into these partnerships and finding the right mix of creator content and brand creative will be a huge factor in future success.



- ✓ Integrate your media and creative strategy: you need to incorporate more people-based collaboration into your planning to maximize brand effectiveness and alleviate stresses on scaling campaigns.
- ✓ Choose to work with creators with values that align with your brand: not every creator will be right for your brand, and that's okay. Don't choose someone just because they have a large number of followers or are trending, find the right fit for your business.
- ✓ **Trust your creator partners:** creators are experts on specific platforms and audiences. Include them in your ideation process to get their perspective and expertise into the mix earlier to start reaping the benefits of their authentic voices.



# The streaming TV ecosystem will consolidate and increasingly rely on ads



The OTT ecosystem has already reached the saturation point when it comes to networks and services, and consumers are reaching the point of exhaustion when it comes to paying out more and more fees for too many channels. That will only get worse as more time is spent on CTV than linear.

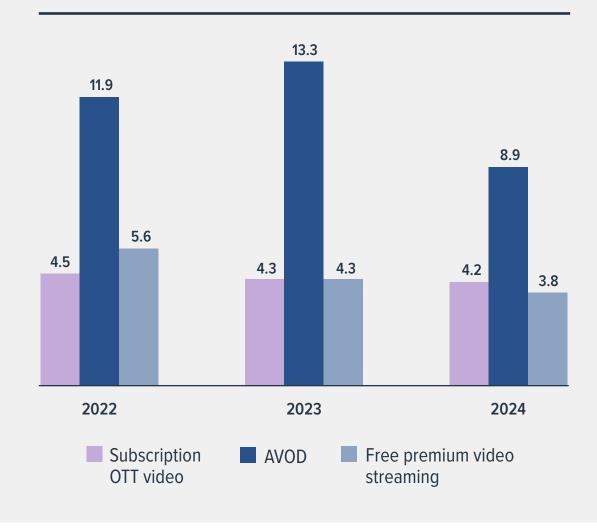
The current level of fragmentation in the market cannot hold, especially as streaming prices rise. Look for more consolidation like we've already seen from the Warner/Discovery merger and the move to add Showtime to Paramount+ to give paying customers more bang for their buck and lure viewers away from the competition.

Another solution many established networks have turned toward is AVOD, which was pioneered by Peacock's launch.

Advertisers will also see valuable ad space opening up through increased deployment of AVOD tiers to keep costs for consumers low, as well as the leveling up of free-with-

### US SUBSCRIPTION OTT VIDEO, AD-SUPPORTED VIDEO-ON-DEMAND (AVOD), AND FREE PREMIUM VIDEO STREAMING VIEWER GAINS, 2022-2024

**Millions** 



Source: eMarketer

ads streaming services like Tubi as IP-holding streaming services look to license out chunks of their libraries to increase profitability for shareholders. TTD and YouGov found that 38% of viewers would prefer lower monthly fees with minimal ads versus no ads at a higher price point.





## THE STREAMING TV ECOSYSTEM WILL CONSOLIDATE AND INCREASINGLY RELY ON ADS

As the conversation around bundling continues to develop, watch for new advertising opportunities from potential bundlers like Verizon and Amazon.

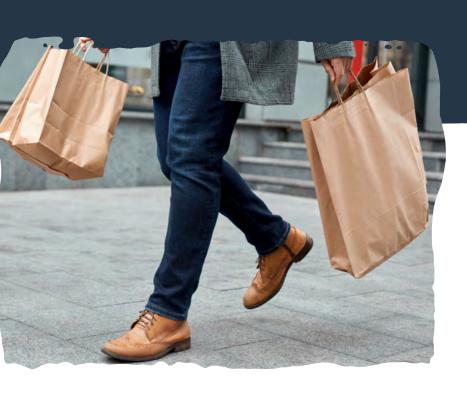
To capture more spend from advertisers, keep an eye out for new capabilities in the OTT space. The big streaming players will continue to invest in better targeting and measurement solutions and augment ad offerings with new options like Al-powered product placement or interactive ad formats.



- ✓ Keep the balance between scale and precision front and center: scale is a central value proposition when it comes to TV, so don't get so granular with addressability and other targeting capabilities that you drive costs up or fail to strategically maximize your reach.
- ✓ Make data-driven decisions about TV investment: look to take a streamlined audience-first approach to media planning that includes a deep understanding of why consumers are watching and what they'll want to interact with in that context.
- ✓ Test into new opportunities: as more AVOD options enter the market, reserve some of your budget for testing. But make sure you're allocating sufficient spend and time to understand whether or not something is making an impact.



Retail media will dominate the bottom funnel for many industries and disrupt the upper funnel for everyone



Retail media is hot on the heels of search and social, continuing to gobble up more and more of the marketing budget across multiple industries. eMarketer predicts that by 2024, retail media will be the fastest-growing ad format and continue to hold that crown until at least 2027.

More and more brands are already leaning into retail media as a core direct-response channel and will continue to do so. But it won't stop there; Amazon and Walmart are already reaching out of their direct-response strongholds to leverage their deep store of invaluable first-party data to help brands get the edge in the upper funnel.

FROM RETAILER
TO AD NETWORK:
THE CURRENT
LANDSCAPE



Source: eMarketer



# RETAIL MEDIA WILL DOMINATE THE BOTTOM FUNNEL FOR MANY INDUSTRIES AND DISRUPT THE UPPER FUNNEL FOR EVERYONE

As advertisers continue to demand accountability, anticipate new measurement capabilities to come out of RMNs, even as you take a trust-but-verify approach using your own data to any in-platform measurement.

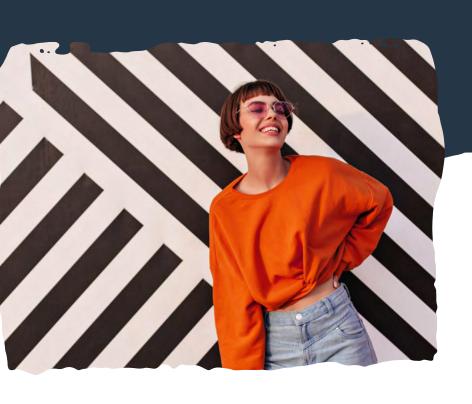
Potentially industry-rocking partnerships like NBCU and Walmart or Disney and Albertsons will also extend retail media's push into the upper funnel as "brand marketing" channels continue to tilt toward a more data-driven model, fueled by OTT and other digital opportunities.



- ✓ Lean into new retail media capabilities and partnerships: look for opportunities that make sense for your business to make the most of RMNs' expansive ad and data capabilities, particularly as they continue to expand.
  Partnerships represent the next big step in retail media and can be the difference between success and failure.
- ✓ Start testing into new networks: part of your media budget should go toward testing into new networks and ad formats, but be strategic. Make sure not to spread your dollars too thin across too many networks.
- ✓ Find creative applications in retail media: these formats have typically been limited to digital spaces, but that's no longer true. New ad types are re-invigorating the brick-and-mortar experience by digitizing the physical space.



# Seamlessness across touchpoints will be required, no matter how complex the customer journey



#### **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PRIORITIES**

% of respondents

Multi- or omnichannel communication with customers 44%

Increase frequency of communication with customers 41%

Integrating customer feedback into company initiatives and strategy 39%

Implement advanced data analysis techniques for CX insights 35%

Upsell/cross-sell opportunities 35%

Personalization of customer journey touchpoints 34%

Al and automation workflows 33%

Source: eMarketer

Consumers have access to more channels than ever, and they expect interactions with brands to be seamless and consistent wherever they occur. But too many brands still view this as a nice-to-have instead of a necessity. That's not going to be sufficient in the future.

Consumers are demanding more, and the brands that successfully build an agile,

channel-less strategy that both expresses the reality of consumer behavior and mirrors business priorities will win. That's true for your approach to Al as well: a study conducted by SurveyMonkey found that 52% of consumers are interested in Al that they consider helpful, whether that's through product recommendations, chatbots on the website, or a special feature experience.



## SEAMLESSNESS ACROSS TOUCHPOINTS WILL BE REQUIRED, NO MATTER HOW COMPLEX THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

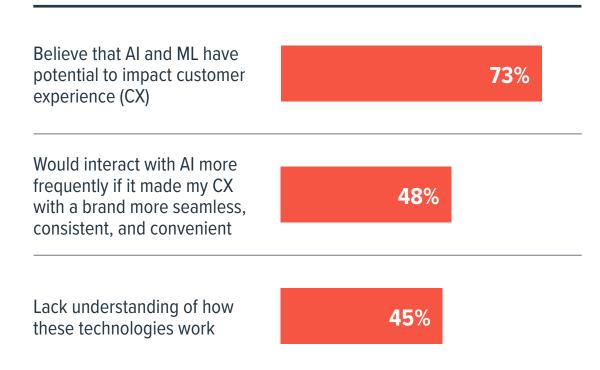
To compete, marketers
need enough data
to understand every
touchpoint for the
business' most important
audiences and quantify the
value of investing in those
touchpoints to leadership.
Al technology can help us
access and interpret data
from across that journey
faster and more effectively.

Instead of relying on ambiguous or vague information that requires a great deal of human

interpretation, the best brands will be able to connect the dots using rich Al datasets. The winners will unlock an unprecedented ability to exploit intelligence from across

### THE IMPACT OF AI ON THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

% of respondents



Source: Statista

the entire business in real time, effectively navigate the complex consumer journey, and generate results without limiting scale.



- Collect and analyze your customer data: you need to understand your customer and what they're looking for from every touchpoint. Figure out which data points provide valuable insights into the customer journey and monitor those leading indicators.
- ✓ Collaborate across teams: assemble the right cross-functional teams to break down silos and share data. Bring in the people trying to create the value exchange, like members of the marketing or sales teams, as well as the necessary tech and legal experts. Each department should get a say in the process and end results.
- ✓ Make sure your site is optimized to make the most of any traffic you're driving from other channels: you need to continuously apply conversion rate optimization (CRO) testing to find ways to improve.





First-party data maturity will become the ultimate differentiator as the marketing industry goes privacy-first



The modern digital ecosystem has been reliant on passive observable identity signals since the cookie was created, but that era is coming to an end, whether your business is prepared for it or not. Right now, some businesses still reliant on third-party data are able to stay in the race with some duct tape and luck, but that won't last forever.

Over-reliance on third-party data will have long-term cataclysmic effects on a business' bottom line and future growth potential, sooner rather than later. Because first-party data is intentionally and consensually shared, marketing powered by that data has the potential to be more accurate and authoritative, provide better customer insights, and convert more effectively.

**55.2**%

5.4%

#### **ADVERTISER PERCEPTION OF FIRST-PARTY DATA**

# How important is your own first-party data moving forward? How important is publisher first-party data moving forward?

Very important	62.3%	Very important
Moderately important	33.5%	Moderately importa
Not important	4.2%	Not important

Source: Double Verify



# FIRST-PARTY DATA MATURITY WILL BECOME THE ULTIMATE DIFFERENTIATOR AS THE MARKETING INDUSTRY GOES PRIVACY-FIRST

Brands that aren't prepared are going to get hit hard as the data privacy squeeze gets ever tighter across platforms and through legislation. But you can't hastily pull together a first-party data strategy. Collecting that data requires a smart approach; Google research shows that you can achieve consent rates of up to 85% and opt-in rates of up to 55% with the right strategy in place.

Marketers who are looking past the next quarter are already mobilizing first-party data strategies that will give their brands an insurmountable advantage in the years ahead, prioritizing data collection and management while experimenting with novel privacy-preserving techniques like data clean rooms before they become a requirement.





- ✓ Seek out privacy-compliant cookieless solutions: data regulations and restrictions aren't going anywhere anytime soon, and will likely get even more stringent. Avoid the data fallout by getting ahead of the issue instead of waiting until the last minute.
- ✓ Focus on a value exchange: explore ways to incentivize consumers to share their data, whether that's a special discount, offer, or interactive quiz. If you give them something valuable, they'll be much more likely to give you what you're looking for.
- ✓ Create a consistent view of your customers: pool together attributes to learn about your target audiences and get insight into their behaviors, preferences, and purchasing patterns with a customer data platform (CDP). You can leverage those data sets to make more informed decisions based on statistical analysis and measurable metrics.



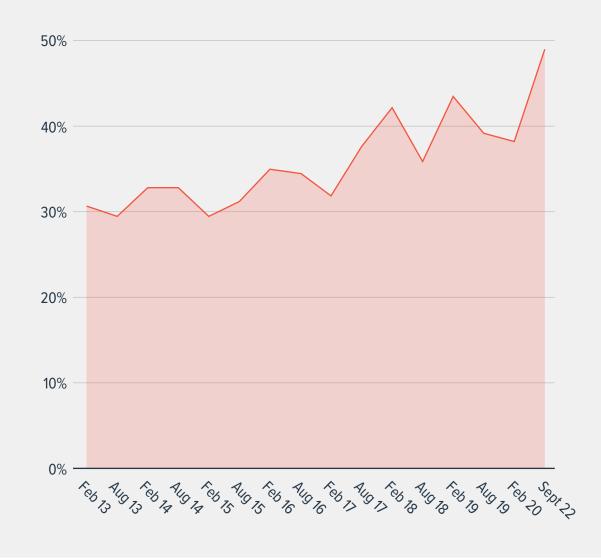
## Robust measurement connected to business outcomes will be essential if you want to be competitive



Every marketer worth their salt knows measurement is important, but it's quickly emerging as a major factor separating the best brands from the rest of the pack. And businesses are more reliant than ever on marketing analytics to make decisions. According to the most recent CMO Survey, companies use marketing analytics to inform 48.9% of decisions; larger companies are even more likely to rely on marketing data at 60.9%.

Measurement needs to hold
marketing dollars accountable to
business objectives, especially
in an uncertain economy. But
many brands fail to connect the
dots between media spend and ultimate
impact because they're hemmed in by the
limitations inherent in solutions like last-click
attribution or making decisions solely based

### % OF PROJECTS INFORMED BY MARKETING DATA



Source: The CMO Survey

on efficiency. Data privacy restrictions are only making measurement harder. A strong data foundation might be the single strongest predictor of success in the next five years.

### THE ULTIMATE MEASUREMENT MATURITY CHECKLIST

BUSINESS IMPACT

#### **PROFITABILITY**

☐ Incremental customer acquisition cost to lifetime value ratio

#### LTV

pCLTV model with feeding marketing insights & measurement

#### **INCREMENTALITY**

☐ Rigorous & robust incrementality testing framework

FULL-FUNNEL MEASUREMENT

#### **EXPANDING KPIS**

- ☐ Brand measurement & survey partners
- Unique reach frequency reporting
- Channel expansion testing

**CROSS-CHANNEL MEASUREMENT** 

#### **HOLISTIC TRACKING**

- ☐ Single source of truth for tracking (ideally including impression data)
- □ Path to conversion reporting
- Customer journey insights
- □ Data clean room + 1P customer data

**SINGLE CHANNEL PERFORMANCE** 

#### **CHANNEL FUNDAMENTALS**

- Audience
- Creative
- □ Bidding & campaigns
- ☐ Testing in place

#### **WHAT YOU NEED:**

- □ Taxonomy
- □ Pixel audit
  - □ QA
  - Advanced signals
- ☐ First-party data integration
  - ☐ Fill in-platform gaps
- Reporting
  - Data visualization
  - □ Granularity



# ROBUST MEASUREMENT CONNECTED TO BUSINESS OUTCOMES WILL BE ESSENTIAL IF YOU WANT TO BE COMPETITIVE

Data-driven decisions will be non-negotiable to stay agile at scale and ensure a brand isn't just prepared for continued changes but positioned to take advantage of them.

You need to level up your measurement maturity, including putting a comprehensive measurement framework in place to track and evaluate performance, align marketing KPIs with broader business goals, and deliver continuous insights at every stage of the funnel, including both brand and performance media.



## Action Items GET PREPARED

- ✓ Evaluate your current measurement maturity: you need to move beyond single-channel performance measurement and build an integrated approach to measurement across channels that articulates incrementality and business impact.
- ✓ Build an accountability framework rooted in specific business objectives: your measurement needs to be grounded in clear goals and incorporate opportunity and challenge indicators that will help you make better decisions.
- ✓ Bring together brand and performance measurement: your measurement needs to be built to identify triggers on the performance media side that will let you know when you need to turn up the volume on the brand side so you can better prime your audiences before engaging them in direct response campaigns.



Search will become an immersive, on-SERP experience... or obsolete as we know it



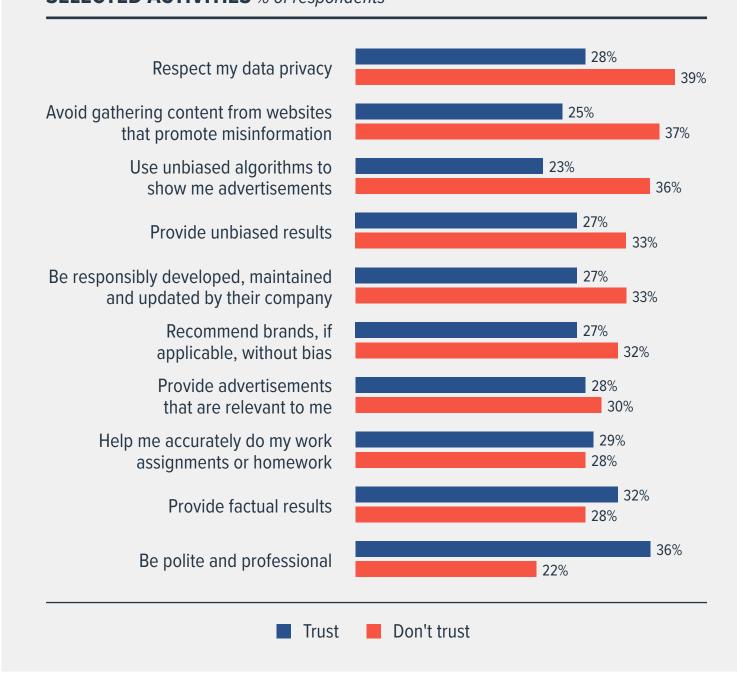
Al will fundamentally change the way people use search engines, and brands need to keep up as consumer preferences change by properly creating and optimizing content in response to shifts in consumer behavior. While decisionmaking frequently starts on a search engine right now, the user journey will likely look wildly different for specific categories as Al integration becomes more widespread.

Consumers don't completely trust Alpowered search engines with all activities, but they're not completely against the idea and

are likely to get more comfortable. Morning

Consult revealed that 25% of people trust Alpowered search to avoid gathering content

## SHARE OF ADULTS IN THE UNITED STATES WHO TRUST AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POWERED SEARCH ENGINE TO PERFORM SELECTED ACTIVITIES % of respondents



Source: Statista

from sites that contain misinformation, while 32% trust Al-powered search to deliver factual results.



## SEARCH WILL BECOME AN IMMERSIVE, ON-SERP EXPERIENCE... OR OBSOLETE AS WE KNOW IT

In the long term, search engines could accelerate the move away from the traditional SERP to something more immersive, conversational, and creative-driven, but it's also possible that the seamless integration of AI into hardware and software/apps could dilute the need for search engines and browsers.

Consumers love being able to do everything in one place; better integration into other platforms will likely result in more of a focus on the content and the user experience than the current iteration of search.



- ✓ Focus on E-E-A-T (experience, expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness): any changes in search will still require strong fundamentals stay front of mind across all of your organic and paid content efforts if you want to succeed on the SERP.
- ✓ Keep experimenting with optimization for Al-powered search: as different search engines' quality standards and capabilities change and evolve, lean into opportunities to test new ranking strategies, including beta testing.
- Monitor audience interactions with Al-powered search: you need to learn how and when people are actually using these new search capabilities and adapt your strategy for optimization accordingly.



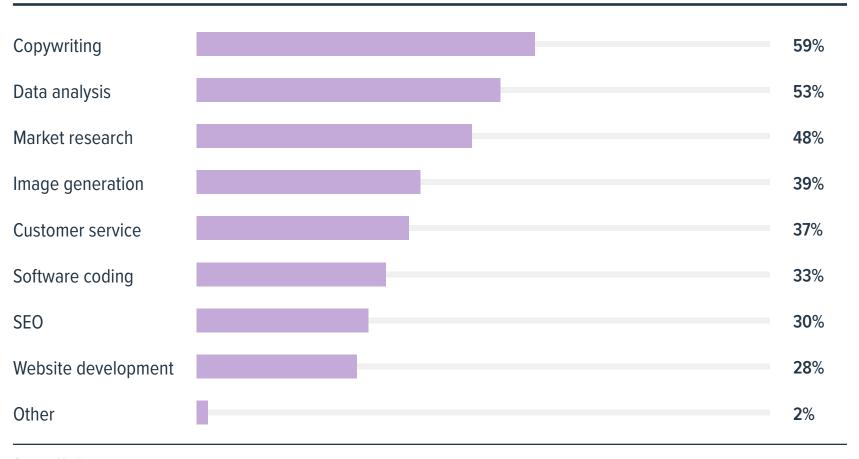
## Smart deployment of gen AI will be a critical advantage (emphasis on smart)

In the next two years, everyone will be leveraging generative AI to augment existing resourcing and ensure their brand has sufficient volume to feed paid campaigns powered by automation.

### Mediaoceans's 2023 mid-year report

shows that marketers are ready to embrace AI in everything from copywriting and data analysis to SEO and website development.

## IN WHICH AREAS DO YOU SEE THE BIGGEST POTENTIAL WITH GENERATIVE AI IN MARKETING?



Source: Mediaocean

But the brands that will unlock the real gen
Al advantage will be smart about finding the
right blend of Al-assisted assets and humandeveloped positioning, creative, and copy.
That can only happen if you take a strategic
approach to prompts, inputs, and human
oversight.

Once you have the right strategy in place, you'll be ready to invest in the right talent

and resourcing decisions to scale these activities in powerful ways that will maximize the impact on multiple marketing channels across the funnel. You will also be less at risk of confusing volume alone for the creative qualities you brand needs to attract and retain customers and eventually grow those customers into brand evangelists in their own right.





- ✓ **Test out different Al tools:** get familiar with these new tools by experimenting and playing with them and look for efficiency or time-saving opportunities across team functions.
- ✓ **Start building Al into your planning:** even if you're not working with Al now, it will be a big part of the future of marketing. You need to be ready when your brand decides they're ready to embrace the Al revolution.
- ✓ **Invest in the right talent:** people will always be the power behind Al. You need the right experts in place to get the best possible results. Human oversight is critical, especially in the early days of development and adoption of these new technologies.



# Get excited about the future of performance media!



The future is what you make it. The changes rolling through the media landscape will affect every brand, channel, and role—and it's up to you to find and capitalize on new opportunities.

That can only happen if you're willing to take some risks. Don't get stuck in the rut of what you've always done; that's the fastest route to failure in this dynamic industry that requires constant evolution.

### Make sure you're ready for what comes next:

- ✓ Don't just focus on short-term gains; consider long-term opportunities in your strategic planning as you evaluate new consumer behaviors, platform capabilities, and emerging tech.
- ✓ Deploy continuous testing to get ahead of the competition so you can be first in line to experiment with new offerings, channels, and tactics that could help you grow your brand and market share.
- ✓ Evaluate your data and measurement strategy to ensure you're getting the information you need in your reporting and are able to quantify marketing impact on the business, developing a measurement roadmap to track toward a more sophisticated approach.

## To the future of performance media (and beyond)!

## READY TO THINK LIKE A CHALLENGER?

Wpromote is an award-winning digital marketing agency with eight offices across the United States. Named the Leader in the Forrester Performance Marketing Wave, Wpromote helps brands Think Like A Challenger to drive transformational growth. Challenger clients include leading brands such as Whirlpool, Spanx, Frontier Airlines, Intuit QuickBooks, and more.

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