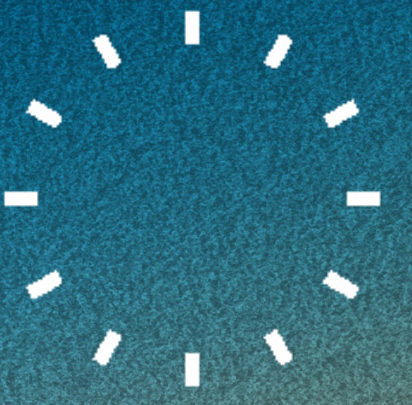




What You Can't Not Know in 2024

THE CLOCKWORK TRENDS FORECAST

Intro duction

157. The number of times the world was supposed to end.
158. The number of times it didn't (and won't be the last).
Because if there's one thing we hate more than the name
'X', it's change.

A cookie-less future. The decline of Facebook. An all-out AI panic. With a little perspective, you'll see it isn't the rapture. It's just Y2K with extra steps.

That's really what this paper is about; turning what seems like apocalypse number 159 into an easy-to-navigate near future in just a few simple steps.

So take off the tin hat, pop a Xanax, and let's get ready to do what we should have done all along: change.

The cookie is crumbling. Now what?

By Amanda Hoosen, Digital Lead at Clockwork

There is no such thing as free content.

From cute kittens to thirst traps and YouTubers that cure the blind for likes; somewhere, someone is getting paid for every second you spend scrolling.

Usually, this is through cookie-powered ads: a quid pro quo that ensures you get great content, while the people making it get paid.

Everyone wins.

Or, at least, they did until Google announced they plan to disable all third-party cookies in the not-too-distant future.

Accept them or not, cookies help make the web a more personal, human place. So, what will the web look like without them?

In the changing landscape of digital advertising, a significant shift is on the horizon. According to reports, Google's Chrome browser will phase out third-party cookies by the second half of 2024, giving us just a few months to make the most of this important tool.

As these trackers become obsolete, concerns arise: how will they influence advertisers, user privacy, and the broader digital ecosystem?

In a post-GDPR and POPIA world emphasising data privacy, comprehending the impact of this change is vital for everyone in digital advertising.

Cookies, consent, and creativity

Cookies have been instrumental for advertisers, aiding in tracking, targeting, and performance analysis. The anticipated loss of third-party cookies disrupts traditional data processes, making accurate conversion attribution and personalised experiences more challenging.

Brands must grasp the complexities of this shift, reevaluating targeting and exploring new technologies. To succeed, adaptation is crucial. This change also magnifies the importance of user privacy, ethical marketing, and consent. While challenging, this future underscores the need for innovation and prioritising customer trust and privacy in creating improved digital experiences.

Adding ad blockers to the list

Ad blockers, along with the demise of cookies, present challenges for advertisers by limiting ad displays and impacting revenue. Performance measurement will inevitably evolve due to data limitations, but such issues aren't entirely new. Many platforms are already seeking alternative performance metrics.

Apple's iOS 14 changes, particularly the App Tracking Transparency (ATT) framework, intensified this shift by allowing users to opt out of marketing tracking, affecting data collection for ads.

For advertising, this means:

- Limited Tracking: Less access to user data hinders understanding and campaign optimisation.
- Attribution Challenges: Tracking data scarcity makes it tough to pinpoint conversion sources.

Platform responses include:

- Aggregated Reporting: Efforts are underway to offer insights without revealing individual data.
- Alternative Measurement: New solutions respect privacy, possibly using aggregated data or probabilistic models.
- Value Exchange: Some suggest advertisers offer exclusive content or experiences for user data consent.

While challenges loom, platforms have historically adapted to benefit both user privacy and effective campaign measurement. Setbacks are anticipated, but with preparation and platform support, maintaining user privacy and measurable online campaigns is feasible.



It's daunting, but a cookie-less future presents an opportunity for innovation, ethics, and creativity.

Adopt a multi-faceted approach.

South African brands making a plan

South African brands, renowned for their adaptability and creative advertising, continue to thrive despite challenges like cookie restrictions. Woolworths has pivoted to first-party data, enhancing customer interactions through loyalty programs and app usage. Standard Bank employs contextual targeting and content-driven strategies, maintaining a strong digital presence without heavy dependence on third-party cookies.

Meanwhile, Superbalist has built a brand community through social media, influencer partnerships, and user-generated content, connecting with its audience without over-relying on cookies. Each of these brands offers insights and strategies that others can adopt to meaningfully engage audiences without heavy dependence on third-party cookies.

What can we do to future-proof digital advertising?

To future-proof digital advertising, a multi-faceted approach is essential. Brands should prioritise collecting first-party data directly from users via sign-ups and interactions on their platforms. Contextual advertising, which aligns ads with content context rather than individual user data, can ensure relevance without infringing on privacy.

It's crucial to adopt transparent data practices and focus on user consent, building trust and staying compliant with regulations. Emphasising creative outputs will drive personalisation when targeting isn't feasible. Crafting non-intrusive and valuable content can persuade users to disable ad blockers. Additionally, investing in native advertising, which blends seamlessly with content, can be a strategic move to counteract ad blockers.

How will this approach impact campaign objectives?

Awareness-based campaigns

- For a cookie-less future, craft engaging visual content aligned with user interests. Employ demographic and contextual targeting for precision.
- Incorporate interactive elements like polls to enhance engagement. Consider native advertising to possibly circumvent ad blockers.

Consideration-based campaigns

- Shift to contextual targeting with relevant placements. Develop compelling ad copy that showcases value. Prioritise overall campaign performance over individual interactions.

Conversion-based (sales and lead) campaigns

- Use in-platform lead generation forms to gather first-party data. Target potential leads with tailored messages. Enhance the quality of landing pages and offers to boost conversions.
- For remarketing, lean on first-party data and modelled audiences. Highlight your unique value in ads and landing pages.
- Adopt a multi-touch attribution model considering varied user touchpoints.

The end of third-party cookies encourages a refreshed strategy prioritising user engagement, data privacy, and tailored experiences. Brands that adapt with creativity and transparency will lead in the next digital marketing phase. Emphasising first-party data, context, and user consent will foster more profound audience connections. The cookie-less future invites innovation for a more balanced and respectful online realm.

AI and the future of marketing: A glimpse into 2024

By Bryan Turner, Senior Data Analyst at Clockwork

Ever since James Cameron warned us about the robot uprising in his 1984 action hit *The Terminator*, people have been on the lookout for the signs. But no one could have imagined that the real revolution would be quite so... weird.

From creating commercials starring former presidents to replacing background actors and even cataloguing porn stars, it's tough to tell whether AI is coming for our jobs or creating entirely new ones.

It's tough to tell whether AI is coming for our jobs or creating entirely new ones.

2023 has been the year of AI in business. Over the last 10 months, marketers have leapt at the opportunities presented by the rapid release of AI tools, and are already reaping the rewards.

The great thing about AI – in 2023 and beyond – is its accessibility. Many agencies, Clockwork included, are quickly spinning up concepts with Midjourney, getting copy ideas from ChatGPT, and processing natural language with VWhisper. In 2024, we're expecting to see some brilliant trends and innovations emerge that can help save marketers time and keep us on meaningful workflows.

The death and rebirth of chatbots

Before the rise of AI, chatbots dominated, acting as basic programs mimicking human conversation. Introduced in the early 2010s, many users found these early chatbots frustrating. Initially designed as expert systems, they operated on a tree of menus guiding users through options, mostly using numerical responses. These systems, more suited for internal users addressing frequent issues, soon faded due to limited success. However, a revolutionary alternative was in the works.

Modern AI-driven chatbots have changed the game. They grasp context, providing an experience akin to conversing with a real person. For instance, after inquiring about vegan ice cream, the bot might offer details and ingredients. When the follow-up question is about using almond milk, the AI seamlessly connects the context, offering a relevant answer—something the older chatbots couldn't achieve. So chatbots are back, and more intuitive than ever. But AI in marketing has much more to offer.

Really understanding customers

With enhanced data collection, we can now accurately identify customer cohorts, allowing for more precise and specialised marketing. While traditionally, cohorts were mainly defined by gender and age, these parameters don't always depict a customer's actual desires.

Previously, tools like Facebook Ad Manager were used for cohort identification. Now, in-house neural networks can analyse our existing data, enabling AI-driven cohorts to deduce customer preferences more effectively. For instance, dog owners have distinct needs compared to horse owners. As our insights into consumer behaviour refine, we can better match offerings to the right consumers, all while adhering to POPIA/GDPR regulations.

Next-level creative concepts

Ideation can face challenges, especially with potential biases in both small and large teams. AI has enhanced the ideation process in 2023 and looks promising for 2024. While AI-driven concept generation isn't entirely bias-free, it likely introduces fewer biases than human teams. As we approach 2024, we foresee AI crafting initial storyboards and copy that creative teams can then refine into impactful content.

By integrating these AI solutions, brands can produce more varied and captivating creative work for their audiences.

Identify and target specific cohorts with the help of AI.

We're in the 'content creator' era. Here's how to make the most of it

By Daniela Riquelme-Morales Thomas, Digital Strategist at Clockwork

'Content Creator' seems like another one of those jobs Gen Zs made up so they could afford to buy houses – but you'd be wrong, Boomer.

Search for 'The Rise of the Content Creator' on Google, and you'll be faced with over 135 million results, highlighting the vast discussion on this topic. Yet, there's still ambiguity surrounding 'content creator' marketing: which influencers to work with? What should they do? How to gauge campaign efficacy? Nicole Quinn from Lightspeed Venture Partners distinguishes that while all influencers are creators, the

opposite isn't always true. So, how can brands maximise influencer marketing and deliver impactful content?

As the content creator movement persists into 2024, we at Clockwork, offer our perspective on the essentials of honest and effective marketing. Here's what you should understand...

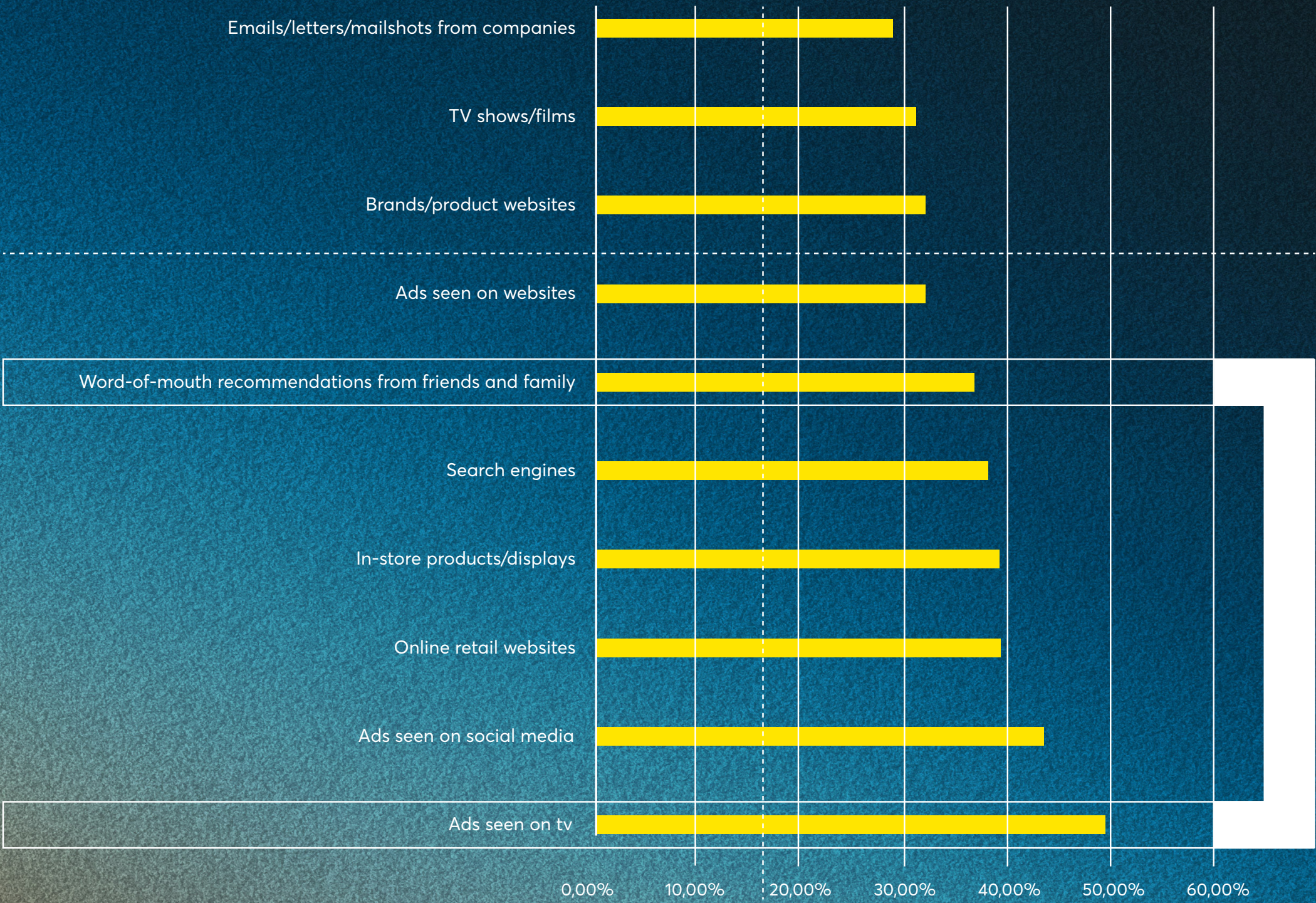
Setting the scene

The term ‘creator’ emerged in the digital world in 2011, thanks to YouTube. Now, it defines a role many older generations might find perplexing. Essentially, anyone publishing online content is a content creator, and if they monetise their online presence, they’re part of the creator economy. Nfinity survey highlights that over half of influencers label themselves as content creators.

The *2019 Ask Afrika Icon Brands survey* pointed out a shift from collectivism to individualism in branding. Success now hinges on brands connecting on an individual level, possibly with the aid of niche content creators.

Two key elements propelled the content creator’s ascendancy:

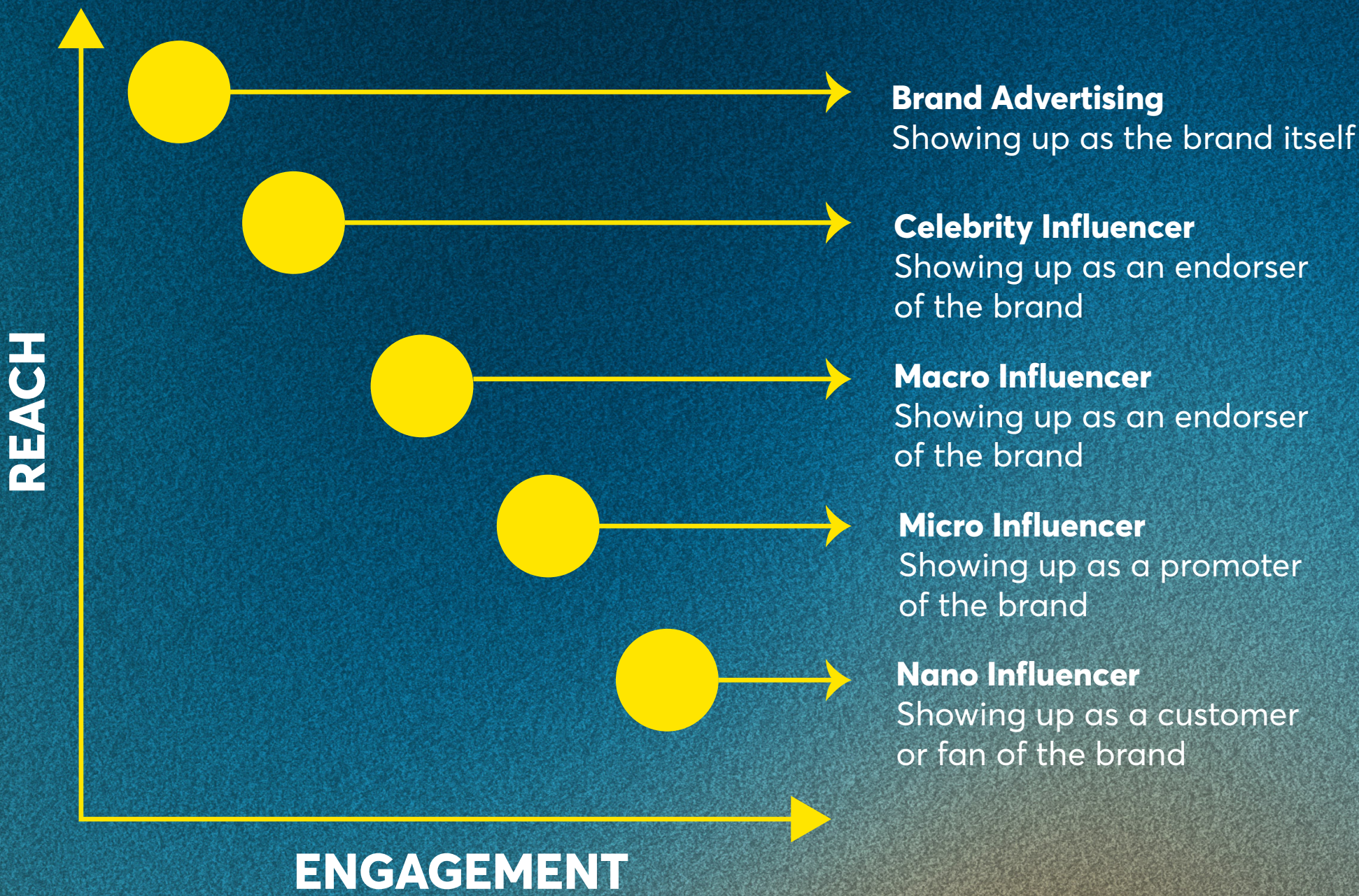
- 01 Platforms prioritise individuals: Marketers keeping up with platform tweaks will note that updates often empower creators, offering monetisation tools.
- 02 Personal recommendations remain crucial: Data from GWI suggests word-of-mouth remains dominant for brand discovery. With the evolution of social media, followers often see creators as quasi-friends. Brands exploit this bond to enhance social media advertising efficacy.



As social media has shaped our habits, creators are almost aligned ‘friends’ to those that follow and support them, and brands have leveraged this connection to bridge the gap in how they advertise on SoMe

The graph illustrates the interplay between reach and engagement. As reach expands, engagement typically diminishes. Engagement correlates with a creator’s authenticity; thus, lesser-known influencers might foster deeper engagement than celebrity figures.

These elements interrelate, leading to a renewed kind of influence, accentuating digital tribes or communities.



While community isn't a novel idea, its resurgence is noteworthy. The pandemic melded offline and online worlds, increasing connectivity but also isolation. This dichotomy caused people to seek digital tribes or communities reflecting their offline passions. These environments are deeply supportive. The creator economy, with its fragmentation, is amplifying this trend, leading these digital tribes into new territories.

The role of influence in advertising

Culture influences communities, which then shape content creators. Conversely, these creators affect their communities, molding what becomes culturally relevant. Clearly, the future of influence is niche and tribal.

For brands, this means identifying their communities and adjusting messaging to align with their chosen content creators. It's crucial to partner with the right creator, as a mismatch can harm a brand's reputation. What works for a gaming brand might misfire for one selling printers.

Brands should reflect on:

- The community that aligns with the brand's proposition, offering, and niche.
- Expectations from content creators in terms of creativity and credibility.
- Community preferences, like platforms they use and their content inclinations.
- The types of influencers within these communities: nano influencers for niche segments or celebrity influencers for wider audiences.

- The brand's unique contribution.

Collaborating with content creators brings risks. Once aligned with an influencer, brands must identify the funnel phase best suited for this partnership:

TOFU: Focus on entertainment to drive product discovery and maintain brand awareness.

MOFU: Highlight educational content. As users consider purchases, detailed information is vital.

BOFU: Engage a broad spectrum of interests on popular platforms, incorporating incentives like discount codes to leverage social commerce.

Influencer marketing in action

Using two Clockwork case studies, we highlight the effectiveness of content creator partnerships for both B2C and B2B scenarios.

Xbox

Xbox aimed to amplify awareness of their PC Game Pass, a subscription service offering a diverse range of quality games. The goal was to resonate with various gamers and echo the passion at the community's core.

We collaborated with leading South African content creators to spotlight the unique features of PC Game Pass, prompting with: "How much fun can you have for R79?" This led creators to position the PC Game Pass (R79/month) as an affordable and enjoyable gaming choice. Adopting a tiered influencer approach, including nano to macro influencers, we reached diverse gamers regardless of their gaming preferences.

The results?

The campaign garnered millions of views and engagements, particularly resonating on TikTok, which accumulated over 2 million video views and 66k engagements. Paid media added 15,000 link clicks.

Overall, the campaign resulted in 2.73 million impressions across platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, surpassing the goal by 24%. Authentic content led to 76.65k engagements, beating the target by 59%. On Instagram alone, the campaign reached over 277k impressions, setting new benchmarks for Xbox, while Twitter and YouTube also saw significant engagement.



**The future of influence
is nano, niche, tribal,
and fanatical.**



**All influencers are
creators, but creators
aren't necessarily
influencers.**

Standard Bank

In the Standard Bank UNBXD campaign, our objective was to bridge the gap between aspiring youths and industry leaders, guiding the youth on how to successfully chart their own paths. With influential cultural figures resonating with younger audiences, we aimed to elevate their skills, passions, and hobbies.

Our mission was to craft a campaign resonating with the youth's entrepreneurial spirit. We collaborated with 10 diverse influencers, entrepreneurs, and social media personalities to mentor and guide. They were tasked with social media posts, creating 'UNBXing' content, participating in UNBXD events, and mentoring 10 upcoming entrepreneurs.

Exceeding our set KPIs of 1.3 million impressions and 82,000 engagements, we achieved 3 million impressions (+266%) and 105,760 engagements (+128%). This success was credited to value-added influencer posts, further boosted by two influencers' live interviews on YFM at no extra cost.

In today's storytelling-driven era, content creators exemplify a more authentic advertising approach. Beyond mere brand messaging, successful campaigns resonate through genuine stories that connect personally with audiences.

The future underscores the growing influence of content creators in shaping trends and consumer behaviour. Brands attuned to this shift can foster deeper relationships with their audiences and execute more impactful campaigns.

The future of search: Zero clicks, social search, and AI

By Amanda Hoosen, Digital Lead at Clockwork

Search has always been about one thing and one thing only: answers.

But what happens when the search engine decides to save your click?

No one visits your website, which means no one sees your ads.

Without ads, how will consumers know what to buy?

Truly, the next epidemic.

SEARCH

In today's digital landscape, search engines are rapidly transforming. Beyond simple text queries and static results, we're moving towards a dynamic ecosystem shaped by innovations like zero-click searches, social platform integration, and advanced AI capabilities.

As we delve into this changing landscape, it's crucial to understand the intersections between these trends. This exploration will illuminate the future of search and offer insights into the evolving realm of information discovery.

Zero-click searches

In recent years, the digital marketing world has been impacted by **"zero-click"** searches on Google. These searches answer user queries directly in the results, removing the need to visit a website.

While it's a topic of debate among marketers and SEO experts due to potential effects on organic traffic, the increase in zero-click searches is attributed to Google's direct answers through featured snippets and other rich snippets that provide concise information at the top of the results page.

What are the concerns surrounding zero-click searches?

- **Traffic diversion**
Zero-click searches can divert valuable traffic away from websites, potentially leading to a reduction in organic traffic and user engagement.
- **Visibility challenges**
Brands may struggle to gain visibility and recognition when their content is condensed into snippets within the search results.
- **Revenue impact**
Reduced website visits can have financial implications, especially for businesses relying on ad impressions and clicks for revenue.

While zero-click searches do present challenges, they also offer advantages, such as increased visibility in search results and enhanced user experience. The key lies in adapting strategies to navigate this **changing digital terrain** effectively.

AI chatbots are set to help users find information quickly.

Creating the best paid and organic media in the age of zero-click searches

What can brands do to thrive? Here are some things to consider.

Featured snippets optimisation Invest in optimising your content to appear in featured snippets. Create concise, valuable answers to frequently asked questions in your niche.	Content enrichment Develop comprehensive, authoritative content that complements the information available in featured snippets. Encourage users to explore further by clicking through.
Voice search focus As voice search plays a significant role in zero-click searches, focus on conversational keywords and long-tail phrases to cater to voice search queries.	Diversify content formats Incorporate various content formats, such as videos, infographics, and interactive content, to diversify your offerings and capture user attention.
Structured data implementation Implement structured data markup on your website to increase the chances of being featured in rich snippets and knowledge panels.	Paid advertising Consider paid advertising strategies like Google Ads to maintain visibility on the SERP, even in the absence of organic clicks.

Zero-click searches have reshaped digital marketing. They pose challenges but also opportunities for brands to optimise featured snippets, voice search, and structured data. It's essential to see this shift as an evolution, not a barrier. Success in this fluid landscape hinges on innovation, adaptability, and a continuous dedication to user value.

The world of social search – what's changing?

Social search lets users seek information or products directly within social media platforms, bypassing traditional search engines. Users lean on recommendations, reviews, and content tailored through algorithms and user interactions. This trend has accelerated in 2023, and TikTok's introduction of the **Search Ads Toggle** is set to further influence it in 2024.

This feature enables users to shift from content to product discovery, giving brands a chance to connect with TikTok's vast audience using engaging ads and benefiting from precise algorithm-driven placements.

This advancement in social search boosts user experience and offers brands a valuable engagement channel within TikTok. Brands ready to adapt to these evolving social search trends are primed for success in 2024's digital environment.



Zero-click searches are on the rise, largely due to Google's quick and direct answers to queries using snippets.

How is AI changing the way we view search?

AI chatbots are revolutionising search by efficiently delivering quick answers. While keywords have historically driven SEO and PPC, the shift is towards more specific prompt searches. These prompts delve deeper into user intent and product interest, enabling brands to customise their messages.

As search evolves, we can anticipate search ads transitioning to “**prompt**” ads in alignment with AI's approach, enhancing their relevance.

What does this mean for brands?

Brands can leverage chatbots in search to enhance customer service, gain insights from data, and improve content with AI-driven edits. Despite AI's influence on search, keywords and prompts remain vital. Brands should stay updated on search trends and integrate chatbots for heightened customer engagement and insights.

SEARCH

Platform changes in 2024: A future view on X, Threads, Meta, and TikTok

By Daniela White, Strategy Director at Clockwork

Choosing where to invest your ad spend is no longer about knowing where to find the most relevant audience, but the least risky platform.

After all, no one wants their shampoo ad showing up next to Andrew Tate.

The fast-paced changes in the social media landscape have been challenging for marketers. In 2023 alone, there was the debut of Threads and Twitter's unexpected rebrand to X. Marketers found themselves grappling with daily operational issues, from ensuring Twitter's API connections remained intact to deciding on the best avenues for their social advertising budgets.

As we approach 2024, these challenges seem poised to continue, given the ongoing shifts in both social platform capabilities and user behaviour.

Social media platforms in 2023

Meta	Instagram	LinkedIn	TikTok	Twitter/X	YouTube
Feb 08: Merged Creator Studio with Business Suite Feb 22: Meta launched a new paid verification service to guard against impersonators and increase reach exclusively Mar 10: Meta announced new Twitter competitor August 24: Threads expanded features in web app	Jan 09: Instagram’s navigation bar is changed again Feb 22: Instagram live shopping halted Apr 17: Instagram improves Reels editing, analytics Jun 27: Instagram users can now download public reels August 1: Threads added new features including a ‘following’ tab	Mar 24: LinkedIn launched page post scheduling in advance, audio events, etc. Jun 16: LinkedIn phased out three creator-focused features Jun 16: LinkedIn company pages can now send and receive DMs	Jan 23: TikTok announced ‘goviral’ button Mar 09: TikTok’s new ‘keyword insights’ tool becomes a game changer Jun 29: TikTok discontinues its BeReal clone Aug 01: TikTok introduces text posts	Apr 03: Twitter reveals how its recommendation algorithm works Jul 04: Twitter limited the number of tweets you can read per day Aug 01: Twitter rebranded as X announcing API changes and subscription packages upon the new launch	No prominent changes by YouTube

With 2023’s changes in mind, what’s the outlook for social platforms in 2024?

Social media in 2024

Is social media dead? Yes, and no. Pundits describe the future of social media as *'less social and more media'*. The landscape is transforming due to evolving audience behaviours.

Here's a snapshot:

- Posting frequency has decreased among users, as influencer campaigns and algorithm-curated feeds raise the perceived stakes of posting.
- Most platforms see increased user activity, though Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) are exceptions.
- Platforms with chat services, like TikTok, witness a rise in direct messages and small group interactions.
- Adam Mosseri, Instagram's head, noted on the "20VC" podcast that teens on Instagram spend more time in DMs than in Stories, and more in Stories than the main feed.

Meta: A shrinking giant

Meta's applications (Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp) continue to set user records into 2023. Daily active users hit 3.07 billion, while monthly active users reached 3.88 billion. With 98.4% of Meta's revenue from advertising, user activity remains vital. However, while user counts rise, it's essential to evaluate growth rates. While Facebook's user growth rate currently sits at 1%, it is set to slow to 0.6% by 2025.

Looking to the future of Meta, it is worth taking a closer look at Meta's Reality Labs. **Meta's Reality Labs**, responsible for AR and VR product development, have seen substantial investment despite losses. Mark Zuckerberg has announced plans to launch four new **VR headsets** in 2024, hinting at them as potential phone replacements.

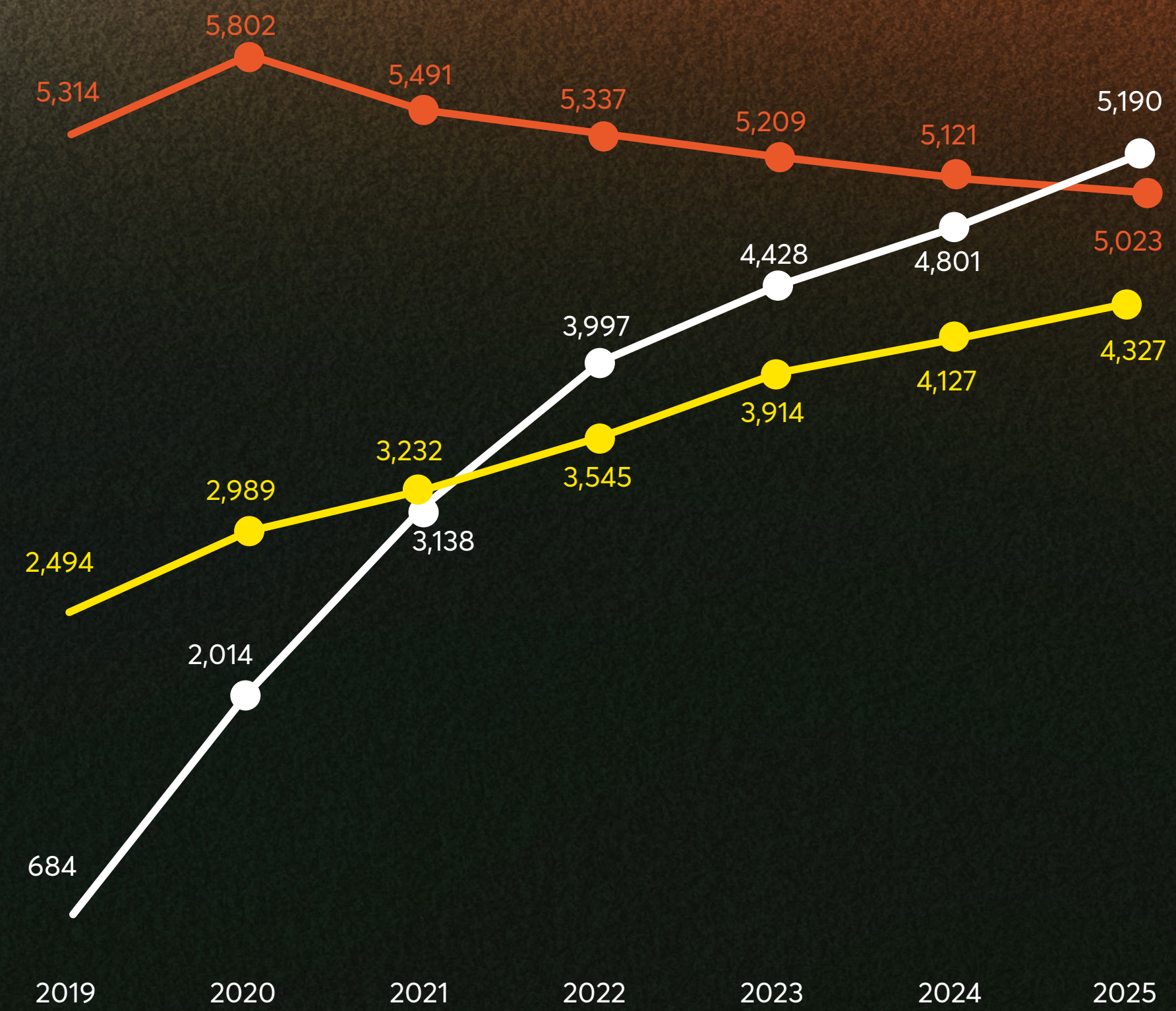
X is set to be re-shaped into an 'everything app'.

Reframing how we think of Meta in 2024

While Meta consistently attracts vast audiences and continues to innovate with features like new *WhatsApp channels*, its evolution into an AR/VR leader stands out. With plans to make headsets more accessible, brands have a golden opportunity to engage users through AR and VR experiences.

As these technologies become mainstream, content creation costs may decrease, paving the way for more brands. The essential question for brands is: how can they craft an immersive story tailored for this heightened environment?

TikTok passed Instagram in total daily minutes in 2022 and will pass Facebook in 2025 millions of minutes per day among the US adult population



Note: ages 18+ ; includes all time spent via any device
Source: Insider Intelligence | eMarketer, June 2023

— TikTok — Instagram — Facebook

TikTok: The next big ecommerce platform

By 2025, TikTok is projected to overtake Facebook in user time spent, with its core draw being entertainment. Despite this entertainment-centric focus, TikTok is continuously evolving. Insights into its future trajectory can be gleaned from recent job listings in September 2023, where they sought engineers and product managers for new social engagement features.

This points towards TikTok placing *more focus on messaging*. Though it currently has messaging features, they remain underdeveloped compared to its primary video-sharing capability. Initially designed for creator-fan interaction rather than genuine user connections, how TikTok advances and nurtures its communication approach will be a key aspect to observe in 2024 as it enables more typical social networking features.

From active user to active shopper

TikTok has been experimenting with e-commerce features, and this trend is expected to expand in 2024. From in-app shopping to product tagging, businesses can leverage TikTok as a direct sales channel. By seamlessly integrating e-commerce features into their TikTok strategy, brands can drive conversions and create a frictionless shopping experience for their customers.

Reframing how we think of TikTok in 2024

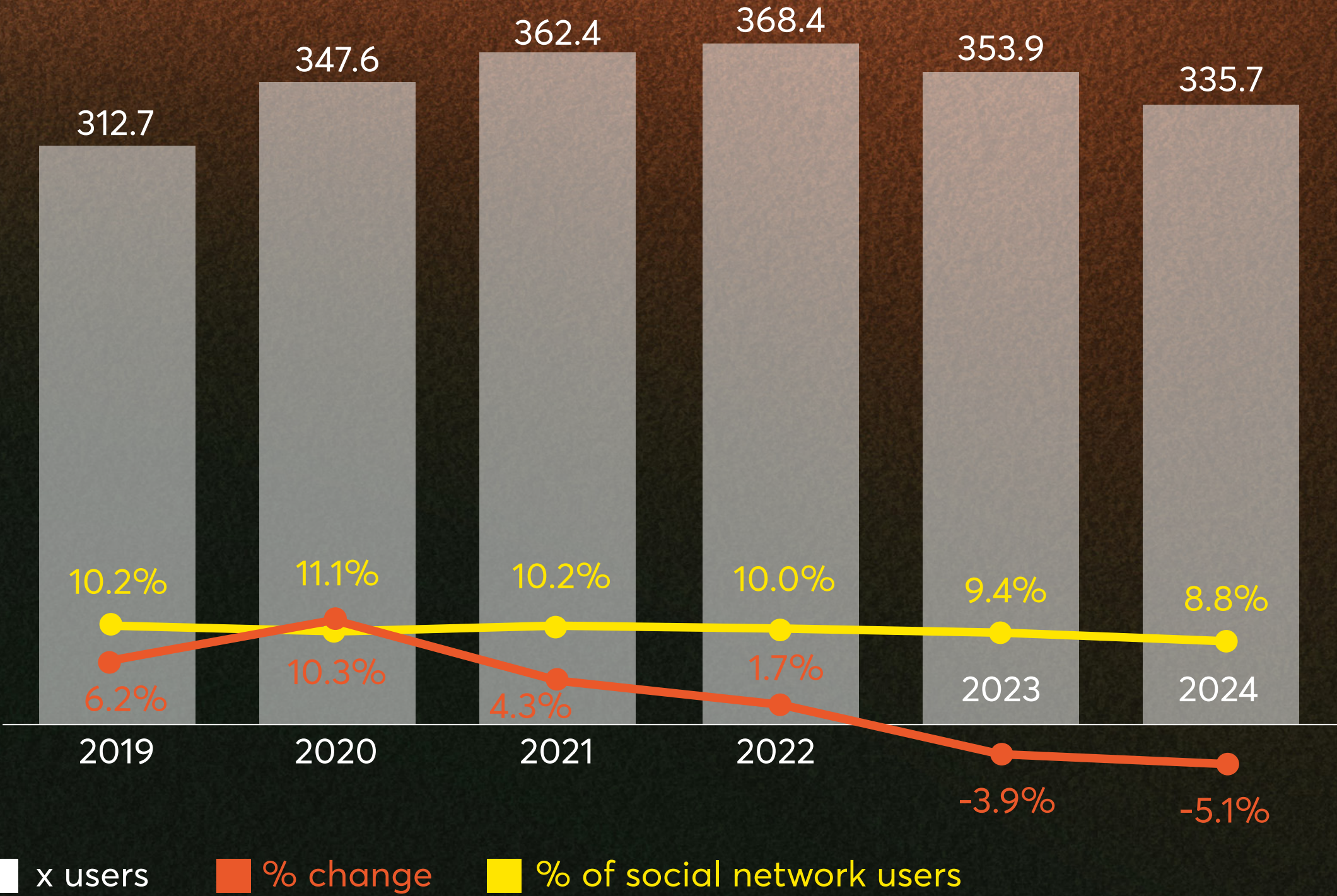
In 2024, we are going to see TikTok mature as a platform. From entertaining and engaging audiences, to aiding in search for and discovery of new products, to possibly owning in-app shopping. If they haven't yet ventured into TikTok, it's time for brands to seriously consider some form of presence in this space, even if it's on an experimental level to understand how audiences respond and engage in the space. It's time to learn what works and what doesn't.

X: The everything app

Arguably, the platform that saw the biggest shifts, even rifts, in 2023. The year also saw brands hold back spend and take a 'wait and see' approach to the X platform. The question is, how much more 'waiting' should we allow? Especially considering the other major shifts in platforms, where budget could be well deployed.

According to the above chart, X is set to decline in user growth. "Users will start to leave the platform next year as they grow frustrated with technical issues and the proliferation of hateful or other unsavoury content," said eMarketer's principal analyst, Jasmine Enberg.

X Users Worldwide, 2019-2024
Millions, % change, and % of social network users



Note: internet users of any age who access their X account via any device at least once per month
Source: eMarketer, Dec 2022

Unfortunately, the advice into 2024 is to wait and see.

Declining ad spend

X's ad revenue is projected to revert to its 2019 levels this year. Major advertisers, including Amazon, IBM, and Coca-Cola, reduced their spending dramatically, leading to an 89% decrease from \$71 million to just \$7.1 million between September 2022 and March 2023. Given that brand advertising comprises 85% of X's ad income, its decline in big brand commitments will impact revenues.

While old Twitter wasn't a staple in most advertising strategies, X's challenges with content moderation and ad performance existed before Elon Musk's involvement. Tight budgets and declining returns make it less appealing for brands to invest. From 1 April to early May 2023, U.S. advertising revenues for X reached \$88 million, a 59% drop from the previous year.

Amid these shifts, X's rebrand aims to position it as an 'everything app', inspired by WeChat in China. There's speculation about integrating banking and payment services, indicating further changes ahead.

Reframing how we think of X in 2024

X is set to evolve into a super app, offering diverse services in a unified space. Brands should see X not just as a social network but as a platform delivering services. However, its success hinges on sustaining its user base and curbing negative behaviours and hate speech. While major advertisers have rejoined, many remain cautious due to potential risks. The guidance for 2024 is, yet again, to take a watchful wait-and-see approach.

Applying the trends

The problem with most thought pieces is that they think too much. They theorise this, and hypothesise that, but do-arise very little. Make no mistake, doing is everything.

Part 2 is all about

how to take what you've read here today, and actually do something about it. Using design thinking, we've developed a guide that those in marketing and communication can use to predict how these trends will impact you, so you can figure out what your core focus should be for 2024.

Once you're clear on your focus areas, you can design interventions to work through or around these disruptive trends when they arrive.

This process is also about questioning your data. Challenge yourself to review what you know, what you assume, and open yourself up to new findings and approaches.

Also note that we only look at how to apply trends in the middle of the process. That's because trends shouldn't be applied just for the sake of it, but only in the context of defined goals or opportunities.

The CW 2024 Trends Planning Framework

Key elements of the Framework

1. Create Focus

Define the core marketing and communications goal for 2024. What are the 3 key barriers for success and 3 opportunities to leverage in relation to the 2024 goal?

2. Validate

Get input and gather data.

Validate whether these are in fact barriers and opportunities. Define key questions to interrogate through data to validate your assumptions.

We encourage you to:

a) Ask clear questions, so that you can clearly define the data you need to gather and analyse.

b) Consider that what you know may need to be validated. Treating 'facts' as assumptions can be an interesting way to look at problems in new ways.

Guided by data, be open to being wrong. For example, it may be assumed that competitors are more active in their communications, making it difficult for your brand to cut through. The key questions to validate would be: How much 'Share of Voice' does my competitor in fact have? And on what topics?

The answer to this would validate your assumptions and enable you to make more informed decisions on your strategy for 2024.

By homing in on each of your barrier and opportunity statements, and treating them as assumptions that should be validated, you are taking a moment to more deeply reflect on what is known. Allow the data to guide you, be open to the opportunity to change your perspective, and look at barriers or opportunities in new ways.

3. Synthesise

Pull your findings together. Now that you have looked at the data, revisit your core goal and your barriers and opportunities.

Did the data you found change your views? Are barriers in fact opportunities, and opportunities barriers?

Based on this reflection, re-write your goal. Review your barriers and opportunities and re-write them as activity statements.

For example, to position ourselves as the leading 'XXX' company, we must harness our thriving social community on Instagram as brand ambassadors.

4. Define Success

Define your measures of success for 2024. Having defined your goals and activity statements, define what success will look like. In December 2024, what do you want to have achieved?

Make sure that these align to your goals and activity statements. Use SMART objectives to clearly define these.

5. Apply

Now reflect on trends. Which of the trends identified will impact you? How can you leverage these? What do you need to implement to future-proof your marketing and communication?

Do you have an efficiency problem? Marketing AI could help you. Are your search costs increasing? You might need to review your search strategy. Are you needing to get your product known in niche communities? Well, an experiment with influencers might be your next step.

6. Categorise

How do we treat the application of each of these trends? Which of the trends identified can be applied now (small wins) versus those that need time to assess and validate (big bets)?

7. Experiment

Can we define specific interventions that allow us to test, learn, then implement? Now for the big bets, let's create experiments.

We recommend holding 5-10% of your budget to test specific initiatives in a controlled manner.

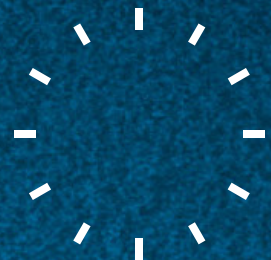
A simple guide on how to do this would be to define your goal, build a hypothesis, figure out how to test your hypothesis, run the test with a clear measurement plan, including a baseline, gather findings, and review.

8. Iterate

Assess, roll out, and measure. The final step is to consider how your current optimisations and experiments are working to shift the needle against your key measures of success.

Closely track what is working and optimise as you go. Your experiment turned out great? How can you now expand that into your marketing plan?

Now You Know What You Can't Not Know in 2024.

C L  C K W O R K