



What's Hot?!

December 2024



How Brands are Approaching Christmas Campaigns this Year

As we celebrate the festive season, the7stars has been looking into how brands have started to adjust to consumer needs in Q4. Despite a relatively negative year, and with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis showing no signs of easing, the Christmas season is still full of optimism.

The latest results of the7stars' Quarterly Tracker (QT), from November 2024, embody this. When asked what emotions they feel most throughout the festive period, the top three for most Brits are happiness, excitement and relaxation. Nonetheless, when it comes to people's personal financial situations, it would be remiss not to mention the concerns people have. 36% are apprehensive about being able to afford Christmas this year, though 61% will 'definitely' be shopping for Christmas presents, despite the economic gloom.

We have already seen how this resilience to spend during Christmas has impacted ad spend in Q4 2024. Total UK ad spend has grown faster than consumer price inflation this year, rising by 7.8% compared to 2023, with large increases being driven by Online Display and Search according to WARC. This reflects the industry's confidence in the Christmas period as a powerful moment to deliver highly emotive, resonant messages about British brands that extend beyond the 25th of December. However, ad spend is not seeing wholesale increases across the board. TV, Mail, Newspapers and Magazines are all media channels that are forecast to receive a lower Christmas spend this year.

While Linear TV is forecast to reduce its numbers this year, it remains the third biggest media channel for advertising this quarter, and we shouldn't be too quick to downplay its importance. Equally, SVoD providers such as Netflix are introducing ad tiers that are appealing to the British population and boosting the overall brand image by doing so. Research conducted by MTM demonstrates that value-for-money perceptions amongst these brands have already improved by 6-8% this year since the ad tier's launch, highlighting the potential for the broader TV landscape to keep delivering for advertisers.

Focussing on the ads themselves, M&S has released the first 5-star Christmas ad of the season, according to System 1 Group. If this year is anything like 2023 – where 20 different creatives received the coveted 5-star award – M&S won't be the only great ad we see before the new year. Expect to see many more adverts successfully touching upon the strong emotions that Christmas evokes in the coming weeks. The ad combines craziness and humour from celebrities like Dawn French, and continuity with the return of the Christmas fairy.

Christmas is undoubtedly the prime season for advertisers looking to connect with the mass market. Despite the economic crisis, audiences are still invested in the joy that Christmas can bring, and brands are following suit by investing in advertising at high levels. From the outset, the race for consumers' hearts will be hotly contested and harder than ever, with only M&S currently succeeding ahead of the pack through major investment in celebrity, narrative and Christmas magic.



TikTok's Take on Q5 And Beyond: Playbook Tips and Tricks

Some exciting publications from TikTok have prompted interesting discussions around marketing on the platform as we wrap up 2024 and look toward 2025. Including platform-based solutions, key statistics and keywords, TikTok is providing advertisers with all the tips and tricks they could wish for to optimise campaigns and spark creative discussion over strategy.

The publication of 'Q5 Season', a playbook breaking down the hidden quarter between Christmas and early 2025, seeks to support advertisers in taking advantage of that post-Christmas period, where audience attention spikes, making for an important time for awareness and conversions, especially on social platforms. Top topics according to the playbook are expected to be related to apparel, food and beauty, with strong statistics across a variety of verticals. According to TikTok's statistics, '#SelfCare' will be top of the agenda for post-holiday consumers and shoppers. Their advice covers extending campaigns beyond the festive period, utilising targeted promotions to increase footfall traffic for brands, and promoting products in collaboration with the TikTok Creator Exchange. With 49% of top content users saying they anticipate creator shopping content, and 38% leaning towards hauls and reviews, audiences are looking to creators to fuel their post-holiday purchases. This collaboration with established creators may prove an invaluable opportunity for clients to brand favourability and purchase intent, especially within the beauty vertical. The Creator Exchange, alongside the Q5 Season playbook, is the perfect seasonal gift for brands and advertisers to optimise campaigns, as we bring the 2024 year to a close.

TikTok marketing strategy for sports advertising has been a hot topic following the publication of the 'SportsTok 2025 Playbook' in preparation for the coming year. The report features a demographic breakdown of the platform's affinity for sports, with 57% of 18+ account users watching sports content on the platform. The playbook emphasises a 29% increase in interest in audiences after consuming sports content on TikTok, as well as 28% of users discovering entirely new sporting events. This suggests the need to consider opportunities for upper funnel targeting, as well as traffic and conversion-focused campaigns when building strategies for brands and clients. Additionally, the playbook offers a fantastic guide for optimising engagement that will resonate with online communities. It includes strategic tips on media flight dates to spark pre-event buzz, sustain excitement during the event and drive post-event debate, maximising engagement throughout sporting events and beyond. This may lead to brands and advertisers considering the opportunity of an upweight and longer flight dates, rather than short bursts at the point of sporting events. The playbook also offers TikTok measurement strategies for branding and full-funnel campaigns, concluding with creative solutions such as the TikTok Creator Marketplace and Symphony Assistant, and how these could be integrated within sports campaigns to maximise ROI.

Overall, TikTok's latest playbooks, including the two discussed, highlight some fantastic advertising strategy opportunities heading into 2025, capitalising on the emphasis towards the pivot in audience perception of TikTok as an entertainment platform. The push into the increasingly popular TikTok shop presents untapped opportunities. Longer form content, such as those product reviews and hauls we've come to comfort-watch, along with debates around sporting events, continue to captivate the platform's increasingly active communities. Together, these trends open some very exciting doors for creative and innovative campaigns as we approach next year.



The Misconceptions Around Youth Disengagement with News

It's often claimed that younger generations are disengaged from news brands, but this perception is misguided and ignores the evolving ways in which media is consumed today. With so many touchpoints to access news in different ways, people are consuming it earlier than probably ever before. This shift opens up substantial opportunities for marketers to build trust and drive conversions for their brands through news platforms.

There is a significant disconnect between perception and reality when it comes to news brands. Trying to understand consumer behaviour is difficult. In [a survey of Brits](#) aged 15–29, only 16% reported reading news online, and 49% of Brits believed that news was not important to their peers. These figures seem to reinforce the stereotype of youth apathy and perpetuate the myth that young people don't care about news content. However, Newsworks, the marketing body for national news publishers, has challenged this narrative, arguing that it's inaccurate. They reasoned that: "media research relying on recall can be difficult." They agreed that capturing real behaviour, rather than self-reported habits, was the most effective way to measure engagement, and therefore conducted a year-long study.

According to the recent [Newsworks study](#), young people engage with at least six news articles per day, on average. News brand content was found to be 85% more trusted than any other content on social media, offering a strong argument for its role in the digital ecosystem. The study also highlighted the commercial potential of news engagement. Seven in ten people turn to retail sites after reading news brand content, and six in ten share news with others several times a week. When comparing consumption of content online, news was found to be third in terms of overall reach, and 75% of people have taken some kind of retail action after reading a news brand.

News as Entertainment and a Gateway to Informed Decisions

Young people agreed that news is an important aspect of our society. Many say it helps them participate in informed discussions and allows them to stay up to date with key issues. These findings underscore how deeply integrated news is in younger audiences' lives, far from the supposed apathy often assumed.

For young consumers, the news serves multiple roles. They are interested in a diverse range of categories, from politics and the economy to sports and celebrities. News serves as much to entertain as it does to influence and educate opinion.

Why This Matters for Brands

For marketers, these insights offer a roadmap to effectively reach young audiences. News brands provide a brand-safe and trusted environment to connect with younger demographics. Talking with programmatic teams can help to better target young people on news platforms. Reminding clients of the proven trustworthiness and influence of news brands is an extremely effective strategy and is a powerful way to reach specific target audiences, transforming myth into measurable success.



Key Trend Predictions for 2025

With 2025 on the horizon, we've drawn on the expertise of specialists across the7stars to share the key emerging trends that advertisers should pay close attention to in the new year. From VOD to SEO, these trends present significant opportunities for brands across a variety of sectors to deliver innovative campaigns effectively.

Navigating the Future of AV Advertising – Balancing Linear TV and VOD to Maximise Reach in 2025

Over the past decade, VOD has grown hugely in popularity. Although linear TV continues to lead the way in reach, this growth is only predicted to continue in 2025. These increasingly diverse viewing habits present challenges to advertisers, as video viewing has never been more fragmented. To succeed, advertisers must embrace variety and understand different preferences for linear TV as well as BVOD, SVOD, and AVOD.

While some marketers plan to reduce broadcast TV spend in 2025, most intend to increase spending on streaming. However, a healthy combination of linear and VOD is encouraged as the best way to maximise reach. Advertisers should focus on finding the right mix of video platforms, including YouTube, as it re-joins BARB, to meet their brand goals and objectives.

Morgan Lloyd, AV

AI is Reshaping How Businesses Achieve Online Visibility

AI is reshaping how businesses achieve online visibility. E-commerce, in particular, will feel the impact as generative AI revolutionises the way users interact with search results. Tools like Google's Search Generative Experience (SGE) will provide tailored answers and summaries directly within search results, reducing traditional click-through rates and challenging brands to adapt.

Visual search will become increasingly influential, with imagery, 3D models, and augmented reality playing a central role in helping businesses, especially in e-commerce, stand out. At the same time, the growing dominance of zero-click searches will make it essential for brands to create engaging, value-rich content that captures attention directly on their pages.

In this evolving landscape, organic success will depend on adopting smarter, AI-powered optimisation strategies, focusing on understanding user intent, and delivering meaningful, well-structured content. Technical SEO—ensuring fast, mobile-friendly, and well-optimised websites—will remain the foundation for visibility.

Mon Slater, SEO

Growing the Platform Mix and Understanding the Use Cases of AI as the Social Media Landscape Evolves

As political and legal changes affect social media usage across the world, we expect the advertising industry to broaden its use of platforms to include up-and-coming apps such as BeReal and Threads as they develop their ad offerings. Larger players that previously dominated this space are becoming less popular in the wake of socio-economic change. As a result, we expect the landscape to become more fragmented in 2025, with smaller-scale platforms offering new, innovative opportunities for brands to engage their audiences.

We also predict that the use and impact of AI in social media advertising will continue to grow, as the leading platforms embed this technology into the foundations of their ad offerings. This will challenge brands and advertisers to engage users in creative yet authentic ways, as users become savvier with their time spent on platforms and more selective about what they choose to consume.

As advertisers, we must remember to connect with our audiences on a human level when using AI and understand when and where it fits into a broader advertising strategy.

Nadine Trimmer, Paid Social



OOH Ad Revenue Surpasses £1bn in 2024

Out-of-home (OOH) advertising revenue has exceeded £1bn in the first nine months of 2024, marking a 12% year-on-year increase, according to Outsmart. This strong performance builds on 2023's total ad revenue of £1.3bn.

Q3 alone generated £361m in revenue, a 4.4% year-on-year rise, making it the best-performing Q3 on record. Digital out-of-home (DOOH) advertising played a significant role, with ad revenue growing by 7.7% to £243m. DOOH accounted for 67% of Q3 revenues, up from 65% of total revenue in 2023.

The data, collated by PwC, underscores the growing momentum within the OOH industry, driven primarily by digital innovation.



Netflix's Ad Tier Reaches 70 Million Users

Netflix's ad-supported tier has achieved 70 million global monthly active users, a 75% increase since May and a fivefold jump from 15 million users a year ago. Over half of new sign-ups in ad-supported markets are opting for the ad tier, highlighting its rapid growth.

The milestone coincides with the launch of Netflix's in-house ad tech stack in Canada, allowing advertisers to manage ad buys directly within the platform. This move marks a shift from relying on third-party services. It follows expanded partnerships with Google's DV360, The Trade Desk, and Magnite earlier this year. The ad tech system will roll out globally in 2025, offering enhanced targeting, reporting, and forecasting capabilities.



November Box Office Boosted by Blockbuster Releases

The November box office saw a 95% year-on-year increase, generating £145.4m thanks to a strong film lineup that included *Wicked*, *Paddington in Peru*, *Gladiator II*, and *Moana 2*. This marks the highest monthly box office total since the "Barbenheimer" phenomenon in July 2023, which grossed £160m.

Wicked led the month with £32.4m in just two weeks, becoming the sixth-highest-grossing musical of all time, surpassing *La La Land*. *Paddington in Peru* (£27.8m) is outperforming its predecessors, while *Gladiator II* (£24.8m) and *Moana 2* (£14.6m) also contributed significantly. All four films achieved over £9m in their opening weekends.