



What's Hot?!

June 2026



What the Industry Should Know About the Social Media Ban

The much-anticipated social media ban for under 16s [has been announced](#) by the UK Government, set to come into force in early 2027. This comes just months after similar legislation in Australia to curb online harm for children sparked intense debate worldwide.

Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, X and Facebook will all be blocked, with the government using the same framework as in Australia. It will ban under-16s' access for 'user-to-user platforms' that enable social interaction between users, allow them to post material, and use algorithms to recommend content that keeps users engaged.

As with any significant regulation, the social media ban is likely to have impacts across the advertising industry. In recent years, adspend has flowed to social platforms at a similar pace to the rest of the world, with Meta alone taking the largest chunk of [incremental ad revenue](#) over the last two years.

While this would suggest the ban will have a seismic effect on the industry, analysts note that the vast majority' of advertisers do not currently target under-16s in their [campaigns](#). So, if adspend isn't the concern, what does this ban tell us about social media use and the way brands interact on them?

[As of early 2025](#), around 5.3 billion users, or 65% of the global population are on social platforms. But there are signs that this rapid homogenisation is slowing: annual growth of users is on the decline. It has decelerated to just 4-5% a year, a steep drop from the double-digit surges seen earlier in the 2010s.

Even prior to the implementation of the ban, many youngsters self-report attempts to use social platforms less. Mindful social consumption is on the rise, with screen time monitored, and niche devices like the [Brick](#) growing in popularity.

While many brands might panic in the face of this and ask 'what happens when no one sees our social ads anymore', there is no need to catastrophise. Social still presents a highly captive audience across platforms including TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, where targeting techniques are growing more sophisticated with each passing year.

[Sajeeda Merali](#), chief executive of the Professional Publishers Association, has said the 'current climate' around the use of social media presents an opportunity for 'expertly curated content'.

This is an opportunity to engage in more creative, different ways with creators, to push beyond only performance and look for the spaces where micro-influencers and communities sit, to really reach your target audience. If people are looking to spend more time offline, it may mean they become a far more captive audience when they are online, remembering far more from a single hour of screentime than they would from six.

Social may be changing, but the ban and these shifts in behaviours need not be a death knell; instead they are an opportunity to adapt.



How Brands can Meaningfully Engage with the LGBTQ+ Community

Amid concerns over 'rainbow-washing' and backlash from prominent political figures and organisations, Pride month feels somewhat quieter this year.

Where once there were brands aplenty eager to jump on board with floats, campaigns, merch, TV spots, social content or fundraising, it now feels much trickier to drum up engagement, and questions about 'brand safety' are even being bandied about.

For those brands still keen to engage with the community, to represent queer audiences and understand the business case for representation in advertising, there remain myriad ways to do so with authenticity.

Working with creatives

If your LGBTQ+ campaigns feel performative and hollow, could it be because they are being created by people who do not fully understand the community? When creatives from specific minority backgrounds are involved in creating the physical work, not just making the odd suggestion, or correcting misrepresentations, it will land far better with those audiences.

Consulting the community

There are a range of organisations that support agencies with creating diverse campaigns, and a lot of the people in those organisations are LGBTQ+. The [Diverse Standards Collective](#) work alongside brands and agencies to ensure the cultural insight is there from the outset, not sprinkled in as a last-minute consideration.

Supporting vital causes

LGBTQ+ charities have faced a catastrophic rollback of funding. Community projects are struggling, councils are pulling away from events, and as rights are up for debate again many feel helpless. Brands have an opportunity here. For example, in the face of the Supreme Court ruling last year presenting trans women with life-changing repercussions, [Lush](#) began raising funds for charities supporting trans rights with their Liberation bath bomb.

Ensuring everything is alright at home

When a workplace is not inclusive, nor one where queer people can thrive, consumers will see through hollow LGBTQ+ inclusivity messaging.

Working with the community, raising funds, creating diverse campaigns are all amazing actions. But companies should also consider the policies they offer, from shared parental leave to transition policy and adoption policy. Queer people in organisations should not just be consulted; they should spearhead such policies that disproportionately affect their community.

Keep the faith when it comes to working with the LGBTQ+ community. The brands who stay with us will be remembered in the long run.



WFA Forecast Predicts Steady Growth for Advertising Market

The World Federation of Advertisers' latest Outlook report has been released, providing an industry-wide view on how media advertising prices are expected to evolve globally in the coming year. As a contributor to the report, the7stars has provided additional commentary to accompany the WFA's inflation figures.

The data suggest that 2027 will be something of a 'market reset' for the industry. In contrast to previous years when select channels have experienced rapid inflation, the coming year is set to be a low-volatility, steady growth environment.

Some of the highest-growing channels in recent years will continue to grow and evolve. These include Digital Retail Media, forecast to experience inflation of 5%, as it continues to scale with more retailers developing sophisticated ad networks. While this will lead to a greater distribution of spend, it will also bring enhanced competition for premium environments as more brands enter the Retail Media fray.

Digital channels will continue to drive overall growth, with Digital Video and Social each forecast to increase by 3%. However, this growth is now more mature and predictable than in recent years, as an abundance of supply limits potential inflation in CPMs.

On the linear side, while the presence of the Men's FIFA World Cup in 2026 is creating a clear upswing in demand, with 15% inflation forecast this is expected to be a temporary spike, with Linear TV pricing set to normalise to +8% in 2027. While viewership across linear channels is in decline, these channels continue to make up a core component of many advertisers' strategies, as part of a balanced media plan, with potential to reach audiences in high-attention formats.

As linear TV experiences some volatility, VOD pricing continues to grow at a steady rate of +2% across both Broadcaster and Subscription streaming formats. As viewership shifts to advertising-supported streaming, the market continues to mature, increasing inventory while keeping demand for access to the most premium content high.

This is reflective of a programming environment where audiences are presented with greater choices than ever before, yet select programming continues to deliver viewership peaks. Successfully building a media strategy that maximises these premium opportunities while also reaching audiences across contextually relevant content will be key for brands in this space.

Meanwhile, as in recent years, Print is predicted to continue recent declines as audiences shift attention elsewhere, with -2% inflation this year, primarily to online news and video formats. While this is placing increased pressure on publications to meet demand, premium titles show continued resilience and there remain ways to engage audiences within such environments.

Overall, the WFA forecast paints a reassuring, structurally driven picture of market change, with inflation trends closely aligned to CPI averages and fewer major spikes and troughs expected. While digital dominance is now fully established, most channels continue to experience modest growth, and none can be said to be truly 'dying'. This should create opportunities for advertisers: more ways to reach audiences than ever before while safeguarding access to premium, high-impact placements.



Beyond Purpose: How Sustainable Advertising Builds Sustainable Brands

We are now more than halfway through the decisive decade, and it has never been more important for brands to act on sustainability. However, in today's climate of scrutiny and '[greenhushing](#)', many are scaling back, with some avoiding communicating their green credentials for fear of saying the wrong thing, and others quietly retreating from their purpose commitments altogether. At the same time, consumers are becoming more discerning, increasingly able to distinguish between brands that merely say the right things, and those that actually do them. With over half (54%) of consumers [admitting](#) that they would stop buying from a company were it found to have been misleading in its sustainability claims, according to KPMG, authenticity is now both a moral and a business imperative.

According to a 2022 [report](#) from Purpose Disruptors, advertising is responsible for up to 32% of the carbon footprint of an average person in the UK - around 208 million tonnes. This is an uncomfortable reality that places advertisers in a precarious position. How do we reconcile an industry built on driving consumption in a world that urgently needs to reduce it? Acknowledging this tension means we can also recognise the potential for our advertising to create change. Advertising has a powerful role to play in the transition to a net zero economy, with the ability to shape culture and influence behaviour. Campaigns such as Hubbub's [Find Your Oooh](#), which encouraged 7 in 10 consumers to switch to plant-based choices, demonstrate how this influence can be harnessed to normalise more sustainable choices and shift everyday behaviours.

Purpose messaging is most effective when it becomes integral to the core of a business. It shouldn't be treated as merely a communications tactic or short-term campaign. When integrated throughout a brand's operations, commercial strategy, and communications, purpose [becomes a driver](#) of trust, resilience, and long-term growth. Within this, media planning has a critical role to play. Done well, great media planning can deliver both business results and environmental progress.

Increasingly, 'green media' is also efficient media. By reducing emissions across media plans, whether through smarter channel selection, more targeted delivery, or more conscious formats, we can reduce wastage across the media ecosystem. Efficient trading allows spend to flow exclusively through sustainable partners, safeguarding brand safety while reducing carbon across the supply chain. Further, tools like the7stars' Gravity Connect mean we can use data to optimise delivery and reduce duplication, cutting carbon without compromising reach or effectiveness. For brands including Gousto, these efficiencies have delivered significant uplifts in ROI, minimising wasted impressions.

Sustainable advertising isn't just about what we say. It is also about how we say it, where we say it, and the impact of the media itself. Purposeful planning only sharpens our ability to reach the right audience, with the right message at the right time. Pushing brands to be more conscious of their media impact, by nature, also results in more impactful media.

The future of purpose marketing lies in integration, not isolation. When sustainability is built into businesses, reflected authentically in their communications, and delivered through smart, efficient media planning, it becomes a powerful driver of both growth and progress. A green business can be a successful business. And increasingly, the two will become inseparable.



Why the UK Consumer Isn't Cracking Under Geopolitical Pressure

Since the United States and Israel co-ordinated military strikes in Iran in February 2026, an already unsettled global environment has been defined by cycles of disruption and fragile stabilisation.

Recent weeks have seen clashes followed by pauses in hostilities, with the Strait of Hormuz tentatively open as diplomatic talks resume. Energy markets have cooled from their peak, but remain sensitive to further disruption. The result is not a return to normality, but the embedding of volatility into the global economy.

Yet, despite this backdrop, the UK outlook remains resilient. Economic projections continue to paint a moderately positive picture, with inflation [trending down](#) and the IMF recently [upgrading](#) its economic growth forecasts for the country. A similar projection is evident within the advertising industry, with the latest IPA Bellwether Report [revealing](#) UK marketing budgets are the highest they have been in two years.

To understand how this tension is playing out in real terms, the7stars has tracked consumer sentiment closely over recent months. The results suggest that, while Brits have been preoccupied with news of the Iran conflict, its impacts have been met with a degree of acceptance and adjustment.

British consumers are, unsurprisingly, feeling the weight of the situation. More than half (53%) report feeling frustrated by the conflict, while 41% say they feel angry. The geopolitical fallout is shaping perception too, with 45% saying they now view the United States more negatively. Much like during the Ukraine War and recent domestic economic turbulence, consumers are adjusting rather than retreating.

Where change is happening, it is selective, with holiday travel the [most immediate casualty](#). Some three-quarters of Brits say they intend to avoid booking travel outside of Europe within the next six months, as airline disruption and flight cancellations abound. Meanwhile, closer to home, one-third say they are worried they will not be able to afford additional energy price increases should the conflict linger on.

Meanwhile, a 'keep calm and carry on' mentality that has been so important to British identity over the past century persists. While 44% of consumers say they will cut back on non-essential spending in the short term, most are resorting to minor changes rather than drastic shifts in behaviour

Crucially, this environment is fostering a more pragmatic relationship between consumers and brands. A majority (58%) of Brits say they expect brands to have to increase prices in response to the Iran conflict, and most are accepting of this – if handled sensitively. For brands, this increases the importance of clear communications and transparent pricing. Following years of economic turbulence, consumers are extremely alert to inflation, shrinkflation and quality changes. Such changes, without clear explanation of why they need to occur, will not only be noticed but will reflect negatively on brands.

This dynamic elevates the importance of brand strength: those which prioritise customer service and demonstrate the benefits of their products should be protected from sudden shocks, even if finding new customers becomes harder in the current climate. Rather than dramatically re-evaluating brands, consumers are becoming more selective, prioritising value and reliability.

As the recent IPA Bellwether report showed, brand building advertising will hold outsized presence during these trying times. For even though the current climate is uncertain, Brits have demonstrated continued resilience throughout recent disruptions and will look to reward the brands that serve them well throughout this latest conflict. As Britain enters a transitional phase with yet another change in Prime Minister, this resilience will again be put to the test. But if recent consumer behaviour is a guide, it is unlikely to break.