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## **The End of Google Universal Analytics**

Google Analytics 4 (GA4) has been publicly available for a few years now but very much as an evolving product with several expected features missing. However, last year Google announced that its current solution, Universal Analytics (UA), would be sunset on July 1st, 2023. After that, brands would need to migrate to GA4 to continue tracking traffic on their websites.

Now, as we approach the deadline, GA4 is more feature-rich, with new functionality added month by month. Whilst brands may be hesitant to adopt GA4 fully, here's why we believe the opportunity should be embraced rather than feared.

### **User-Centric Approach**

This new approach allows businesses to gain deeper insights into customer behaviour across websites, mobile apps, and other digital platforms through cross-platform tracking. This is particularly valuable for today's multi-device and multi-channel landscape, where customers engage with brands through various touchpoints. GA4 helps unify these siloed data sources into a cohesive view for a more accurate representation of user behaviour.

### **Advanced Machine Learning Models**

New models such as the AI-powered 'Enhanced Measurement,' which can automatically identify and measure key events and conversions, mean brands can reduce manual configuration and uncover valuable insights without extensive setup. Predictive modelling has also been added to help brands predict future behaviours of their users. This gives a clearer indication of various factors, including purchase propensity, churn, and predictive revenue.

### **Shifting Landscape**

GA4 is also designed to address the evolving challenges in tracking and analysing user behaviour, as browser and legislative changes impact data collection. It offers new data modelling techniques that allow brands to continue gathering meaningful insights while respecting user privacy.

### **Flexibility and Granularity**

Event tracking is much more refined compared to its predecessor, offering expanded tracking that allows brands to define custom events and parameters for specific user actions such as video views or file downloads.

### **Integration**

GA4 seamlessly integrates with other Google products like Google Ads and Google Marketing Platform, making it easier for businesses to combine data from different sources for comprehensive analysis, unlocking the full potential of their data in the buying platforms for PPC and Programmatic Display.

By embracing GA4 to its fullest, brands can experiment with the new measurement capabilities, adapt their tracking and data strategies, and optimise their setup for long-term success.

GA4 is here to stay and will be the analytics platform of choice for most brands going forward. For this reason alone, we encourage brands to make use of the new insights and opportunities it brings to make data-driven decisions to fulfil their business objectives.





## Ring Ring: The Unexpected Rise of the Dumbphone

Imagine you were offered the chance to swap your all-action smartphone for a more basic handset. A factory reset, if you will. Would you take it?

If you answered yes, you may not be alone.

Smartphone popularity exploded with the launch of the first iPhone in 2007. By 2022, 93% of Brits owned one, including millions over 40 who once adored their Snake, corny ringtones, and clunky Blackberry buttons.

Yet, in recent years, a small but growing number of consumers have been trading the always-on lifestyle for more basic living.

The 'dumbphone', defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as 'a very basic mobile phone that cannot connect to the internet,' may sound derogatory. But the term is embraced by those motivated by data privacy and social media addiction, amongst other concerns.

Demand for such devices remains low, but is predicted to grow in the next five years – enough for 'traditional' mobile phone manufacturers including Nokia to re-enter the market with low-cost, basic functionality models.

Smartphone fatigue appears to be driving this trend. Asked how they feel about their smartphone, 61% of Gen Z say they would be lost without it (Kantar TGI, April 2023), compared with 68% of Millennials. In the same period 4 years ago, the generations were at parity, 65.4% vs. 65.9%.

For a generation that spends nearly 3 hours each day scrolling social media (IPA Touchpoints, H2 2022), such a shift is startling. And while the dumbphone is unlikely to achieve mainstream adoption anytime soon, growing evidence suggests that Gen Zs increasingly ponder disconnecting.

the7stars' Cultural Codes framework offers clues to factors driving this emerging behaviour. For one, many in Gen Z are seeking 'fauxstalgia' for a time they did not live through or were too young to remember. This partly explains why vinyl record sales are at a 30-year high and the percentage of music streams classed as 'catalogue' rises each year. In turbulent times, a sense of nostalgia for simpler times can offer comfort.

Moreover, championing sustainability and circular living, half of Gen Z say they are increasingly taking their purchase decisions 'slow', being consciously considerate of their wider impact (the7stars Pulse, 2023).

In the same survey, one in four said that when they next need a phone, they will be most likely to choose a more basic or upcycled model, while 15% would even consider swapping their smartphone for a dumbphone at some point in the future.

As Tara Watkins, Head of Insight at the7stars, observes 'Ephemeral Experimentation' in Gen Z's trial-and-error approach to identity exploration, including their smartphone habits. 'Whilst millennials felt the need to be everything, Gen Z are open to trying everything from music, fashion to technology but this doesn't mean they are that indefinitely.' Gen Z fluidity allows for exploring life both with and without smartphones. As she notes: 'This shift may last, they may revert back, or they might find a middle ground.'

At least for now, commuters will keep swimming in a sea of slick smartphones. But as consumers increasingly consider climate impact, cost of living and their own need to unplug, the tide may gradually start to turn.





## **Verifying Impressions across Connected TV as Ad Fraud Rises**

Where digital advertising spend goes, fraudsters often attempt to follow. This has been seen with the rise of Connected TV (CTV), which represents one of the biggest opportunities for advertisers to reach TV consumers in an increasingly targeted way. Along with this increase in spend, DoubleVerify estimates a 69% rise in CTV ad fraud in 2022. With further growth of the Connected TV ad market predicted to more than double from around £800m in 2021 to over £1.8b by 2026, our ability to counter ad fraud must also grow to raise the credibility of advertising across CTV.

### **Why CTV is so vulnerable to ad fraud**

The fragmented nature of the CTV landscape offers a unique opportunity for fraudsters, allowing several points for ad fraud to occur in the process of serving a single impression. Impressions delivered across CTV environments often go through several layers and take different paths from advertisers through providers and finally to users. This limits the transparency of each impression served and makes it more complicated to verify impressions. Furthermore, device spoofing fraud means that other smart devices, such as smart fridges and watches, can impersonate CTV devices, making it difficult to prove whether CTV ads are really being served on CTV.

### **Using existing tools to combat ad fraud**

At the7stars, we take several precautions to mitigate the risk of CTV ad fraud by implementing common-sense brand safety initiatives. This includes working with reputable suppliers and collaborating with ad verification partners to verify CTV ads whenever possible.

We can go a step further by ensuring that our CTV suppliers comply with IAB standards on supply chain transparency to ensure that every impression is accounted for. Collaborating with CTV providers that own their inventory mitigates the risk of CTV ad fraud, reducing the number of paths and layers that any given impression must travel to be delivered.

### **Remaining challenges to verifying impressions across CTV**

Nevertheless, there is still progress to be made before we can safeguard CTV advertising against the risk of ad fraud. Stronger integration between CTV providers and ad verification companies can help bridge the existing gap, allowing fresh solutions to come forward and making trading CTV inventory more transparent. Further technological upgrades to reduce device spoofing across CTV devices will make it more difficult for other smart devices to impersonate CTV devices.

While we are utilizing existing solutions that can help mitigate the risk of ad fraud across CTV inventory, further improvement in ad verification technology is required to verify CTV ads as the market continues to expand. Connected TV is a great opportunity to combine TV advertising with a personalized, data-driven approach, and as advertisers, we must take the necessary steps to ensure that our brands can continue to utilize this space in the most effective way possible.





## **Nurturing Family Time in the Midst of Modern Challenges**

In today's fast-paced society, finding time for family meals has become increasingly challenging. So much so, a study by McCain reveals, that British families spend only six hours together per week. Despite this alarming statistic, many families recognise the value of shared meals as a precious opportunity for quality time.

Work obligations pose a significant hurdle to family mealtimes. With most of the workforce returning to offices, finding time to gather around the table has become more difficult. Additionally, children's homework commitments and after-school clubs further impede family time. Even if families do find the time to be present around the table, the prevalence of electronic devices and social media distractions also affect engagement during meals. Recognising these challenges, McCain has introduced the 'Teatime to Talk' campaign, featuring conversation-starter cards to facilitate meaningful discussions during dinner.

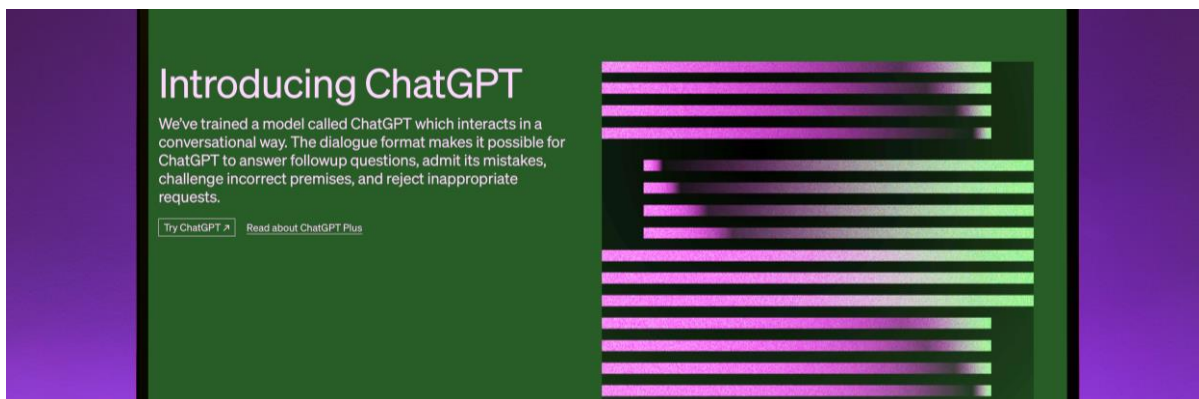
Financial constraints play a substantial role in hindering family meals, particularly for low-income households. The cost-of-living crisis has led some families to skip meals or avoid eating together. Charities and brands have taken initiatives to support those in need by donating to food banks and launching community fridge projects. Rising food prices have become a concern for many Britons, impacting their ability to make healthy choices.

Catering to diverse dietary preferences within a family can create challenges when planning meals. Balancing the needs of vegetarians, vegans, and meat-eaters can be time-consuming and expensive. Fussy eaters further contribute to stress during mealtimes. Nutritionists suggest focusing on connection rather than conflict and creating an enjoyable atmosphere at the table. Munchy Play's innovative plates and Sophia Procter's approach to making mealtimes fun for children exemplify solutions that can ease the stress of feeding picky eaters. Brands have an opportunity to support families by providing resources and products that simplify meal planning and foster positive dining experiences.

By encouraging meaningful conversations, offering affordable and nutritious meal options, and addressing the unique needs of diverse diets, brands can help families overcome obstacles and prioritise the importance of family meals to make them, once again, a cherished part of our routines.

Let's empower our brands to promote the benefits of shared family time: genuine connection, meaningful conversations, and creation of cherished memories... just to name a few. How can we assist our brands in overcoming the barriers to this quality time?





## Superficial Intelligence

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In our quest to embrace the potential of Chat GPT and other AI technologies, we find ourselves inundated with curated social posts and articles, all offering advice on how to optimise our usage or warning us of the impending threat of job displacement by robots. It's time for a grounded assessment:

First and foremost, the capabilities of AI are truly remarkable. Without a doubt, it represents one of the most significant leaps forward in human progress. From the unravelling of DNA's mysteries to the advent of email, from CGI wizardry to the ubiquitous presence of smartphones, and even the convenience of pre-sliced bread, we've witnessed transformative innovations that redefine our behaviours and expand the boundaries of our achievements.

However, let us also acknowledge that we have merely scratched the surface of AI's potential. The evolution of AI technology will undoubtedly continue its upward trajectory. In the future, we may look back fondly at Chat GPT, akin to reminiscing about the days of dial-up modems, as a symbol of our nascent understanding. Similar to the triumph of Gmail over Hotmail and the rise of Facebook eclipsing Friends Reunited, we find ourselves in the early stages of embracing AI, with a palpable sense of excitement pervading the air.

As natural innovators within the media and creative industries, we are quick to experiment, explore, and harness the vast potential that AI offers. Just as we have done with groundbreaking tools such as Apple Mac and Adobe, we strive not only to comprehend AI ourselves but also to effectively articulate its possibilities to our inquisitive clientele.

At this juncture, AI presents an array of remarkably impressive collaborative tools. However, it is imperative to recognize that we remain the architects, instructors, and fine tuners of these tools. Contrary to misconceptions, AI is not a silver bullet rendering human effort redundant. Similar to how the advent of printers revolutionized the workplace, or the gradual obsolescence of cheques with the advent of BACS, or how maps have been supplanted by mobile devices, AI represents progress in various realms.

Effective communication inherently requires the involvement of at least two human beings—one to transmit an idea and another to receive it. Even as we leverage sophisticated automatic hardware and software solutions in the ideation and dissemination of our creative concepts, it's vital to differentiate between intelligence and creativity. Regardless of the speed and ingenuity of AI, the ultimate assessment of its effectiveness lies with us—the discerning arbiters of quality. In essence, the enigmatic 'ghost in the machine' remains precisely that—a ghost.

Or, as our new (yet appallingly named) ally, Chat GPT, puts it:

“The integration of AI into our creative processes enables us to tap into a vast well of knowledge, ideas, and perspectives. The "ghost in the machine" metaphor takes on a new and exciting dimension as we witness the collaboration between human imagination and machine intelligence. By harnessing the power of AI, we can unlock new levels of creativity, fuel innovation, and push the boundaries of what is possible in art, science, and all realms of human expression.”

Is it succinct? Absolutely. But it may lack the endearing typos and the personal touch of subjective opinion, in our professional opinion.



## This month's mini stories

After conducting a poll back in December last year which suggested the majority of Twitter users would like to see someone else head up the organisation, Elon Musk has relinquished his position as CEO of the company. Musk, known for implementing controversial changes to the platform, has appointed Linda Yaccarino, former Head of Advertising at NBC Universal, as his successor. It is anticipated that she will have a significant role in shaping Twitter's evolution into the 'X' app. However, numerous uncertainties remain regarding the direction of Twitter under her guidance and what the future holds for the platform.



The most recent Rajar radio audience data has unveiled a significant milestone: online listening of commercial radio has exceeded analogue listening for the first time. In Q1 2023, online listening accounted for 28%, while analogue listening stood at 27%. Collectively, digital listening now constitutes almost 68% of all radio consumption, with DAB contributing the largest share at 39.8% as of Q1 2023. The data additionally highlights the increasing popularity of smart speakers for radio consumption, comprising 14% of listening (a 4% increase from Q1 2022).

Google recently unveiled several advancements to Search for the first time at their annual Google I/O developer conference, with the most significant advancements including the application of generative AI to enhance users' search results. This feature, alongside their new 'Perspectives' feature, is poised to adjust how users discover information and further their understanding of various topics. The generative AI feature, known as the 'Search Generative Experience (SGE)', was created to simplify complex searches and provide key information in concise ways while also giving access to more extensive resources. The feature is currently available in Search Labs as an experiment on Chrome desktop and the Google App for Android and iOS users in the US.

