

UNLIMITED

CMO BAROMETER

TRENDS AND
TACTICS FOR 2024



NAVIGATING FUTURE FRONTIERS FOR SUCCESS

Adapt, adapt, and adapt again.

2023 was a period of continual change and transformation for marketing leaders. But with the meteoric rise of artificial intelligence and ongoing economic uncertainty, the industry should be preparing for further swings and shifts in 2024.

To that end, UNLIMITED surveyed some of the UK's marketing elite across a myriad of brands and industries to get to grips with what's currently leading the agenda and where the gaps lie for the future. The result? An insight-driven look at the four key opportunities that brands should capitalise on to maximise performance for the year ahead.

From getting swept up in AI fever and the challenges of true integration, to harnessing the power of scientific insight in campaigns and the continual drive for sustainability – we explore the key areas that brands should keep top of mind, each complete with an expert perspective. So, where is marketing heading in the year to come?

Get ready to find out.



FINANCIAL OPTIMISM IS ON THE RISE

The pervasive uncertainty of the economy is a factor that brand leaders have had to grapple with in recent years, with COVID and the cost-of-living crisis looming large over every decision. While economic woes are forecast to continue in the UK – the [Office for Budget Responsibility recently slashed its predictions for growth](#) until 2025 – the marketers we spoke to appear far more optimistic.

When asked about the economic situation for the year ahead, 85% of respondents appeared confident that things will improve.

Similarly, when predicting marketing budget shifts, 83% stated that they believe these will increase by up to 10%. There's no denying it, the UK's senior marketers are expecting an upturn in the economy in the near future.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK 2024



05.07.2021



ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: FRIEND OR FOE?

The thoughts and feelings of UK marketing leaders are clear: 2024 will be a year of growth. But why is this significant? The generally optimistic outlook means that there will be more to play with in terms of investing in new areas and expanding ongoing programmes. Brand leaders will have an appetite for jumping on trends, grabbing hold of opportunities, and capitalising on gaps in the market.





FOUR KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRANDS TO MAXIMISE PERFORMANCE

The good news? With a multitude of routes to venture down, we'll tell you all about where best to focus your efforts to elevate

brand performance. Read on for a breakdown of the four key areas for marketing to tap into in the year ahead.

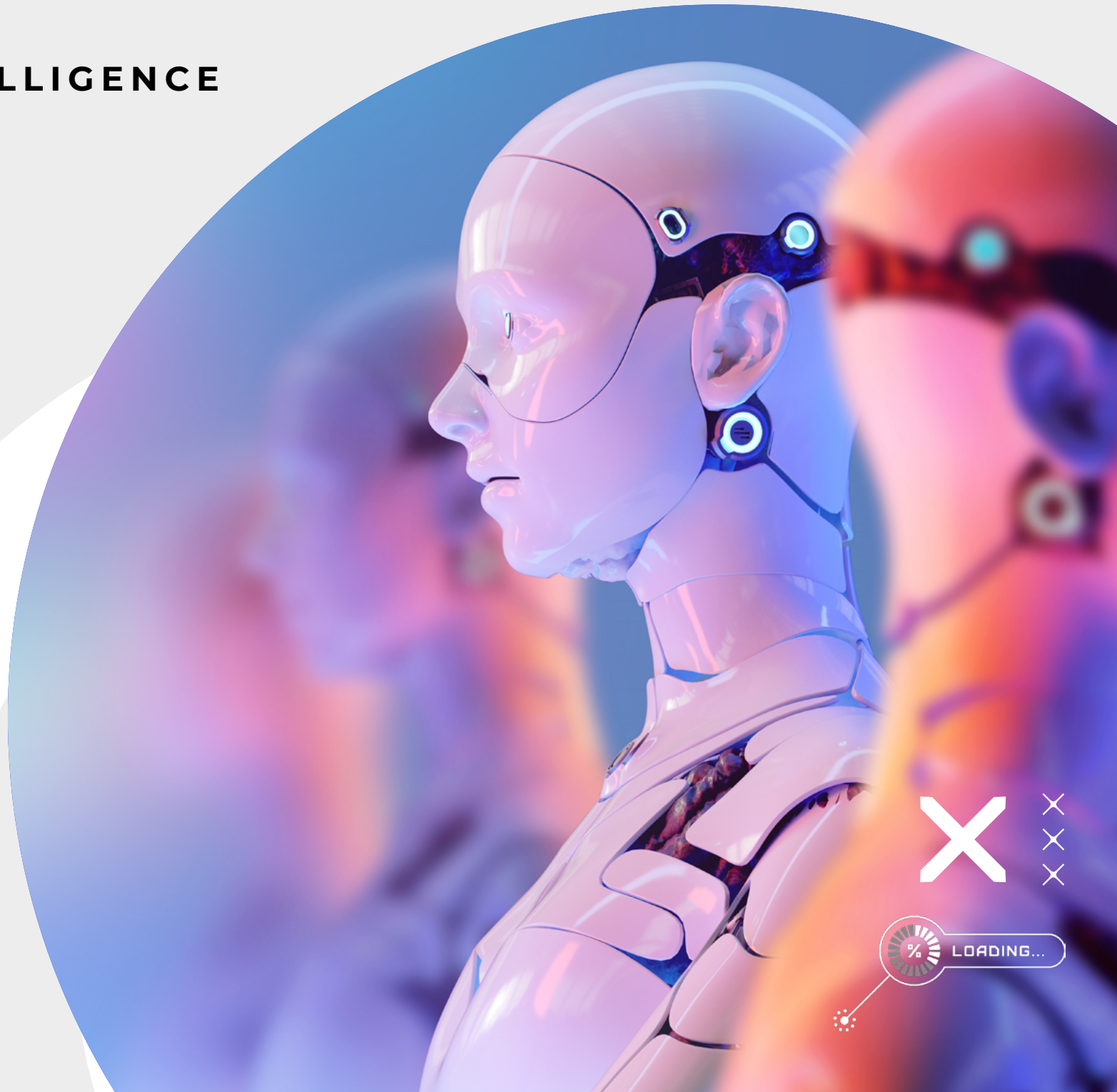
- 1 • **Artificial intelligence is here to stay**
- 2 • **Embedding human understanding into campaign strategies**
- 3 • **The challenges of integration**
- 4 • **The pursuit of sustainability**

1. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS HERE TO STAY

Since generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Midjourney went mainstream, the marketing industry has been inundated with buzz around what this might mean for brands and the world at large. So, somewhat unsurprisingly, AI will continue to dominate marketers' priority lists in 2024:

- **84% of UK respondents believe that artificial intelligence and machine learning will have an impact on their overall strategy.**

There's no denying that AI is a matter of substance over hype. Unlike previous tech-driven trends (the metaverse anyone?), artificial intelligence is not only here for the long haul, but it also has a disruptive potential that we haven't even come close to harnessing.





HOW DO WE KNOW?

We asked UK marketers about the challenges that AI can solve for them, and the extent to which the cutting-edge technology is currently being (under-)utilised speaks for itself. The main use cases include data analysis, improving efficiencies, and automation. In other words, brands are merely scratching the surface when it comes to the ocean of possibilities.

Might the perceived complexity around using AI tools be turning people off? Perhaps many don't feel confident in their abilities to maximise the capabilities on offer, as the recruitment market gets flooded with highly specialised technicians and prompt engineers?

CHALLENGES THAT AI/ML CAN SOLVE



AI MADE SIMPLE

Here at UNLIMITED, our experience with AI has opened up a world of opportunities. And it's all thanks to our AI-powered digital insight engine, [LUCA](#). Boasting a myriad of tools able to solve every shape and size of client problem, each one is above all intuitive and easy to use. LUCA harnesses data in a way that taps into deeper meaning and understanding, no matter whether you're a tech amateur or an AI native.

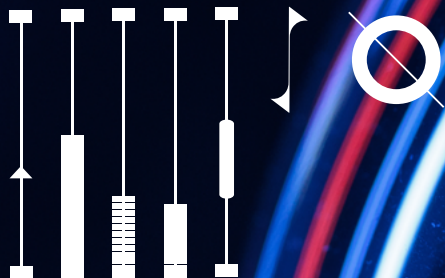
Let's take our most recently launched LUCA tool as an example, [TikTok Creative Intelligence](#). As TikTok continues its rapid rise, companies are increasingly asking for insight into its performance, looking to quickly track competitors, engagement, and content in one place, to inform their strategy and measure the efficacy of their content.

But we know clients really want to go beyond metrics – seeking details around content that require a lot more analysis than the native reporting tools can provide. This is where LUCA comes in.

With TikTok Creative Intelligence, brands can compare their competitor and client activity to gauge trends and move at the speed of culture, all the while keeping a close eye on the hub of the most entertaining content being created right now.

The best part? The tool is easier to use than the TikTok app itself. Complete with an 'Ask LUCA' function, where a simply phrased question outputs any existing data, visualised any way you want it.



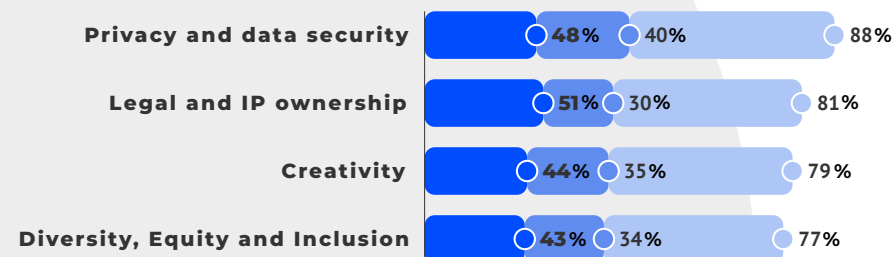


FEELING AI-SHY?

Alternatively, you could argue that the under-utilisation of AI is simply a symptom of caution. It's still early days and some companies aren't prepared to invest millions in a technology for which the business applications aren't yet clear-cut. A touch of this came across when we asked survey participants whether they had any concerns around AI.

Privacy and data security anxieties were referenced most frequently, with legal and IP, worries around the future of creativity, and DE&I also mentioned. Despite adoption almost across the board, there are signs of risk avoidance. But what do some of our experts have to say about it all?

CONCERN ABOUT THE IMPACT OF AI/ML



● Slightly concerned ● Very concerned ● Net concern

HUMANS VS ROBOTS

Since the AI boom we all witnessed last year, Unlimited B2B have been running a regular temperature check series, Humans vs Robots. Charting the speed and scale of developments every quarter,

each instalment zeros in on a different aspect of how brands are tackling the AI question within their business. Check out some choice takeaways and snippets of advice from our most recent panel below.

“**Generative AI is the figurehead or the masthead for AI at the moment. But it's really practical. People can wrap their heads around it – it's not just for techies. Everyone can see the practical usages of the models straight away, so Gen-AI is absolutely where the zeitgeist is. Deeper kinds of AI and the complexities that go with that, they can wait for a little while for most of us, I think.**”



Martin Veitch
Editor-in-Chief,
IDG





“ A lot of data is at play here. Get in early and set your policies. We’re at this interesting inflection point where AI is not particularly regulated – but this is coming. There are going to be more and more guardrails put in place about how AI is used in wider society – it’s imminent, and businesses are going to follow suit and bring up their own AI charters. ”



Leila Hajaj
Executive Communications,
Google Deepmind

“ Go to sources that you trust to give you some insights on how you can take your first steps. We’re used to working within frameworks in our jobs. This is really no different. Look first at specific tools and see what extra abilities they can offer you. It’s about that business case for added impact. AI can’t uncover the individuals who will bring brands to life. That’s up to us. ”



Liza Hicks
Social and Content Lead,
Ex-IBM

“ It’s crazy how quickly things move on from only a couple of months ago. And how everybody is starting to evolve in their Gen-AI landscape. There are a lot of people that still have this fear that AI is going to take their jobs – but in fact, it will just take their tasks. Embrace it. See what joy it can bring to your day. It’s not a tech skill, it’s a life skill. We tell people – even if you don’t use it here, you’ll need it eventually. It’s not going away. ”



Karen Quinn
Senior Director – Brand
and Corporate Comms,
Finastra

HEAR FROM THE EXPERTS

“ *There has certainly been a big acceptance shift when it comes to AI in the past year. But there’s a significant difference between acceptance and knowing where to start or how to maximise the technology. There’s still a lot of work to do once you bring AI tools into the business. Looking at a lot of the use cases cited by CMO Barometer respondents and the clear appetite to increase usage, I actually think we may see a reverse trend once people start to realise how much work, money, input you have to be willing to invest to see tangible results from these applications.*

As the ability to produce content cheaply and at scale will be at everyone’s fingertips, we may see a race to the bottom, with brands buying into content programmes that lack in value. The onus will be on building quality into what you do. Injecting human-led insight at every stage to get that unique, high value output is the differentiator we’re betting on at UNLIMITED. ”



Tom Wilks
Technical Director,
UNLIMITED



HEAR FROM THE EXPERTS

“ *In the rapidly evolving marketing landscape, the spotlight on AI in 2024 underscores its enduring impact on strategy. Taking a strategic approach when it comes to AI is key. By focusing on practical applications, such as data analysis, efficiency improvements, and automation, you can ensure you're always injecting value and insights into client briefs.*

By combining AI's emerging value with research sciences, particularly data, behavioural and neuroscience applications, brands can drive results through a nuanced understanding of human behaviour.

Navigating the intersection of technology, data, and human understanding is the way to pursue marketing effectiveness.

A commitment to demystifying AI and making it accessible to all will be a testament to the foresight and innovation of brands at the cutting edge of this technology. Unlike fleeting trends, AI should be recognised as a substantive force with the potential for transformative disruption. ”



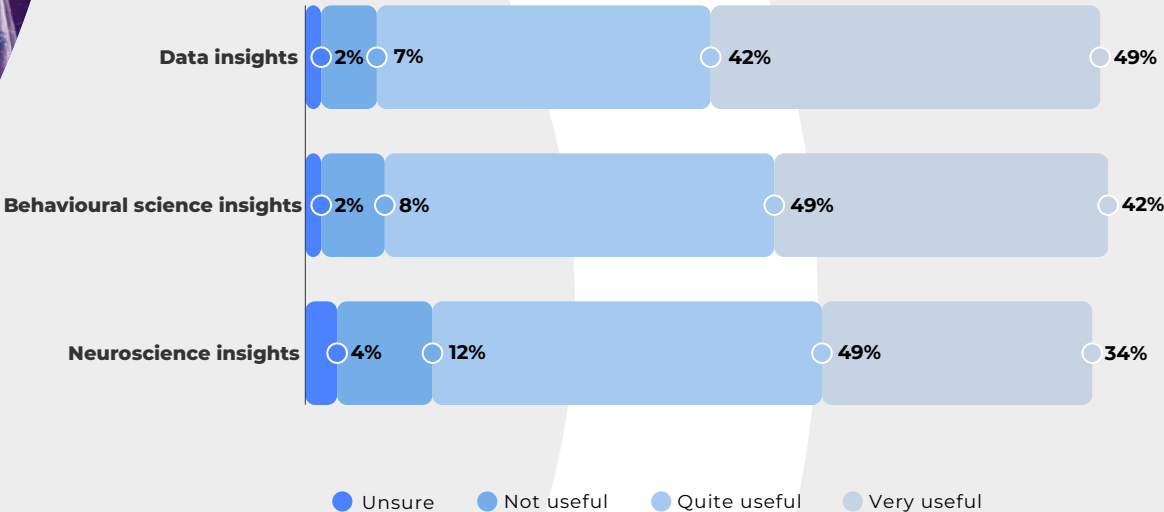
Roi Perez
Digital Strategist,
UNLIMITED





2. EMBEDDING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING INTO CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

USEFULNESS WHEN BUILDING CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES



When diving deeper, our findings uncover a clear gap. How participants articulate their use of each of the sciences is incredibly varied. From data analysis to audience segmentation, understanding the behavioural motivation of consumers to enhancing user engagement – this variance and the low number of uses per science suggest that the value of these tools is not being maximised.

HOW ARE INSIGHTS BEING USED IN CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES?

	Data Science Insights	Behavioural Science Insights	Neuroscience Insights
1	26% Data analysis / insights	22% Understanding the behavioural motivation / cognition of consumers	24% Understanding the behavioural motivation / cognition of consumers
2	14% Identification / segmentation of target audience	16% Data analysis / insights	19% Understanding consumers' response to sensory stimuli
3	14% Improving effectiveness of campaigns	14% To resonate with emotional response / motivations of target audience	14% Enhancing user engagement
4	14% Problem-solving / decision-making	11% Enhancing user engagement	11% Optimising user experience / meeting user needs
5	10% Enhancing user engagement / identification of appropriate channels	11% Identification / segmentation of target audience	8% Data analysis / insights / To resonate with emotional response / motivations



MIND THE (HUMAN UNDERSTANDING) GAP

But with gaps come opportunities. Brands that truly utilise the full breadth and depth of what data science, behavioural science, and neuroscience can bring to marketing campaigns will gain the ultimate competitive advantage.

From developing and testing ads that resonate with audiences emotionally, to validating strategic propositions across target markets;

we've found that with seasoned experts at the helm, scientific insight can be used as the wind in the sails of brands looking to elevate their performance.

But you don't have to take just our word for it – we implement this across all our clients and the proof is in the pudding. Let's take our work for the Cabinet Office as an example.

BRINGING 'HELP FOR HOUSEHOLDS' TO LIFE FOR THE CABINET OFFICE

Last autumn, we launched the 'Help for Households' campaign as part of our remit with the Cabinet Office. With the rising cost-of-living and winter bringing increased energy bills, the government sought to deliver a dispatch to the whole country, making them aware of the additional support available. So, how did we do it?

Faced with an awareness that such a sensitive and important message needed to be driven by an acute understanding of human needs, feelings, and motivations, we worked alongside our experts from the Human Understanding Lab™ to put humans at the core of creative development.

**Help with the cost of
living is available now
for every household**

See what you're eligible for.
Visit gov.uk/helpforhouseholds





UK Government

Help for Households

See what you're eligible for.

Visit gov.uk/helpforhouseholds

AN INSIGHT-DRIVEN CAMPAIGN THAT NAILS THE KEY MESSAGE

First off, we turned to the Human Understanding Lab's implicit testing capability to guide us. Namely, we used a neuroscientific technique called Reaction Time Testing to get to the bottom of what people truly feel rather than what they say, helping us figure out how to communicate with our audiences. The responses were clear: this needed to be a straightforward and direct message, delivered cleanly and simply.

Off the back of this, we developed three strategic propositions and tested these further using the same implicit tools. Our aim? To understand which would be better suited at an emotional level to deliver this crucial communication to the nation.

After the highest performing proposition was identified, we crafted creative stimuli which were further tested using focus groups to ensure a winning campaign route. To bring the campaign to life, we developed TV and radio scripts, digital

out-of-home posters, and display assets.

The result? A simple, clean, and easily recognisable campaign that resonates with audiences and nails the key message, owing to the deeper human understanding at its core. Our work created the desired impact for awareness and action, with the Cabinet Office seeing weighty increases in public comprehension of energy bill support and additional government help.

Following the success of the 'Help for Households' launch, we were also entrusted with the brief for another crucial activation: the 'Energy Saving Tips' campaign. Live throughout winter to educate and inform when energy bills were skyrocketing, we implemented this campaign in a matter of weeks, covering 100+ deliverables across 16 media channels – from TV & radio to digital display, social media, and major national press publications.



HEAR FROM THE EXPERTS

“ *In the public sector, specifically the Government, we have quite a high standard of value-for-money spend on quite low-value campaigns where we require evidence for everything – as you’d expect in Government because it’s the taxpayer’s money. I suspect that we do more on the insight side on those smaller scale campaigns,*

while other businesses might take more of a risk in not always doing that research.

I think some of the language around using insight is perhaps scarier than the tools and techniques themselves. Maybe that’s something to look at in terms of better usage of insight in campaigns and strategies going forward. ”



Abigail Morris
Director of Communications,
Department for Science,
Innovation and Technology

“ *The human brain is a hugely powerful and complex organ that has evolved over millennia to perform a most basic task: keeping us alive. This means that our brains avoid using up vital energy thinking about brands and product or service experiences.*

When we realise this, one of marketing’s fundamental principles is turned on its head. Consumers don’t ‘Think, Feel, Do’. In reality they ‘Feel, Do, Think’.

As a result, effective creative and communication is about feelings, not information.

As the old adage goes: people won’t remember what you said, but they’ll remember how you made them feel.

We believe in neuroscience and behavioural science techniques to get a deeper understanding of the human emotional responses to creative and messaging. Using this insight, we can identify subconscious shortcuts to influence consumers. This helps us design communications that tap into consumers’ mental and behavioural impulses and better shape real-world decisions. ”



Dr Simon Collister
Director of the
Human Understanding Lab,
UNLIMITED



3. THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

Integration is certainly seen as a steep hill to climb by the marketers we talked to. In fact, 80% agree that it is difficult to create true

integration between all the agencies, departments, systems, and tools within an organisation.

“**AAR consults with over 70 brands a year on their marketing operating models and would agree that integration is one of the biggest challenges for marketers. The drive to customer centricity by leveraging data and technology requires the breakdown of silos and the cultivation of unified, collaborative ways of working across client, in-house,**

and agency teams. Without a solid operational model and commitment to integration, even the best strategies will falter. Today, the implementation of marketing (the ‘how’) is equally as critical as the strategy itself (the ‘what’), necessitating a balance of operational and strategic expertise within teams to ensure effective integration.”



Victoria Fox
CEO,
AAR Group



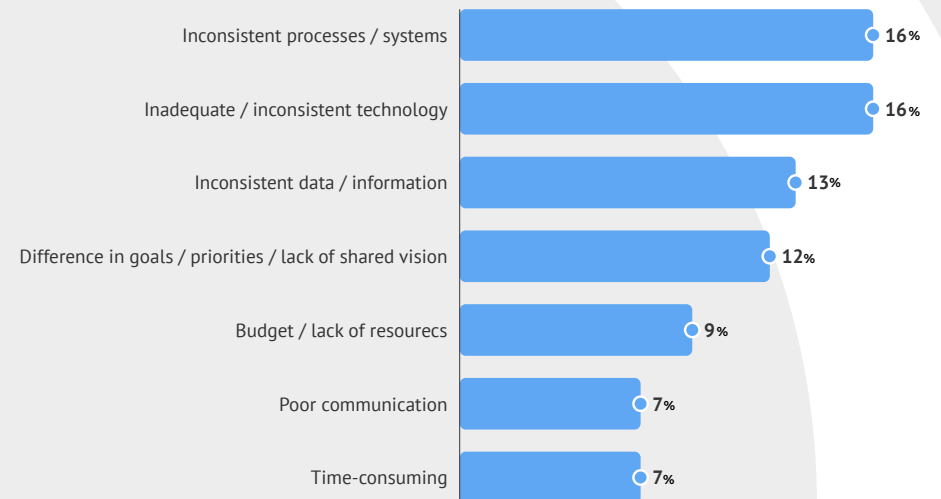
HOLDING OUT FOR AN (INTEGRATION) HERO

When it comes to the areas of integration that pose the most issues, our respondents cite inconsistencies in systems, technology, and data.

However, the vast variability in response here, as well as the low proportions mentioning each topic, point to the fact that the many facets of integration aren't currently being explored in much depth by brand leaders.

Privileged to work with a whole host of clients, both big and small, we're often helping to solve challenges at UNLIMITED. Whether the disconnect lies in systems, technologies, or end-to-end customer journeys, we thrive on helping brands with connected capabilities.

BIGGEST INTEGRATION CHALLENGES



HEAR FROM THE EXPERTS

“

The world of integration has moved on from matching luggage to understanding the role of every touchpoint along the customer journey and the purpose it plays on the way to conversion. Having the systems in place to identity a single customer view is vital for seamless integration of messaging.

At UNLIMITED, we know this better than most as our Human Understanding Lab supports us to gauge what messaging should be used at what touchpoint to maximise its effectiveness. As a central function that underpins everything we do, the Human Understanding Lab means that we can be connected and connecting for our clients.”



Tim Bonnet
President,
UNLIMITED



4. THE PURSUIT OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability continues to rank as a key agenda item for the year ahead, and as such, it's also one of the four key opportunities for brands.

83% of UK marketing professionals agree that good sustainability practices are a driver for their clients. When we dig down into the specific initiatives that our survey participants are active in, the priorities for brands in this sphere become clearer.

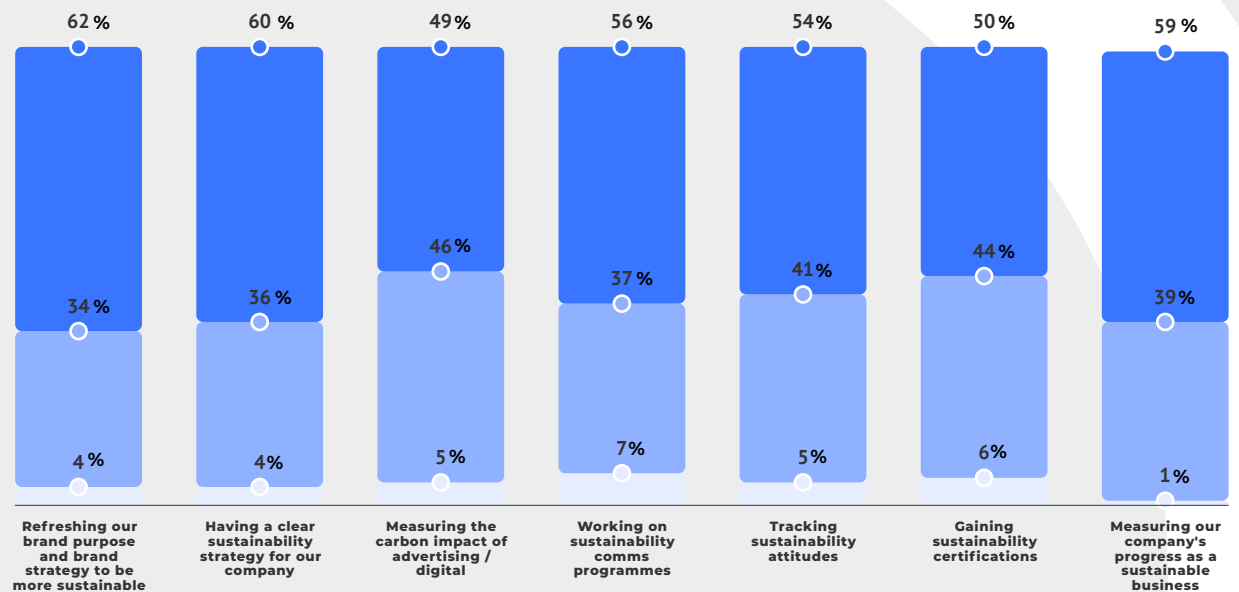
First and foremost, brand leaders are concerned with external perceptions around the 's' word. Is their brand purpose sustainably framed?

Do they have a clear future strategy?

How are their comms programmes performing? Meanwhile, a smaller proportion are focused on measuring carbon impact (49%) or gaining certifications (50%).

It's clear that marketers have an acute awareness of sustainability as a real market driver for their consumers, but are tangibly impactful initiatives taking a back seat?

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES



○ This is not currently on the radar ● We haven't addressed it yet but plan to do so ● We're addressing this already

HEAR FROM THE EXPERTS

“ *This new research is revealing fear amongst brands and organisations, fear of working on sustainability marketing, fear of being accused of ‘greenwashing’. Fear isn’t good for anyone. It isn’t good for brands and their desires to grow (we understand how deeply greenwashing accusations can hurt brand reputation), nor the imperative fight against global warming. Fear as an emotion brings very primal survival mechanisms: fight or flight. And here, it seems that most organisations have decided to fly.*

I would encourage agencies and companies to collaborate more, to understand how brands can avoid this intense scrutiny by bringing more research and insight into message crafting. Authenticity is required to bring those messages and actions to life. Effective comms are an art and a science, so evaluating how these messages, tag lines, campaigns, and activations are emotionally resonating is important. This emotional uplift is as crucial as the words themselves. More research and insight, more comms testing, are key to brands reducing the risk of greenwashing accusations. ”



Dr Cristina de Balanzo
Brand Consultant and Neuroscientist
Walnut Unlimited



HEAR FROM THE EXPERTS

“*Last year’s explosive Cannes Lions festival was a real watershed moment for every C-suite exec who wanted to avoid the reputational disaster of being called out for greenwashing. I imagine that brand leaders will be going back to the boardroom and ensuring they get their house in order before externalising sustainability messaging. But this shyness, this “once bitten” approach, shouldn’t mean that sustainability takes a back seat.*

Instead, brands should be looking at more subtle hooks into sustainability. Take the rise in menstrual underwear as an example,

where messages of comfort, ease, value for money, rather than sustainability, often take centre stage in the marketing. While the green message won’t be at the forefront (without a very good reason for it), it can be weaved into other campaigns. The marketing industry should be looking to continuously remind consumers of the importance of sustainability – if these nudges begin to fade away, we risk losing far more than our reputation.”



Caroline Coventry
Managing Partner,
Nelson Bostock Unlimited





MAXIMISING BRAND PERFORMANCE WITH UNLIMITED

More than ever before, the year ahead will be one of test and learn. Some brands will be looking to see how far they can push their AI capabilities, while others will only be beginning their journey, gradually looking to dip their toe in the numerous opportunities.

While innovation and technology may again drive headlines and marketing budgets, brand leaders shouldn't forget the importance of purpose-driven initiatives like sustainability in 2024. Brands are already winning big in campaigns where purpose plays an increasingly pivotal role, and this is only set to continue.

Now that you have more of an idea of where to start focusing your efforts, the question lies in how to ensure success for your brand. Whatever your number one priority for the year ahead, our experts are here to help you capitalise on any insights that may not yet be on your radar. With a depth of knowledge spanning research, planning, and creativity, UNLIMITED can guide you at every stage of developing, refining, and implementing your 2024 strategy, whilst ensuring consistency at all your consumer touchpoints

Please get in touch for more information:



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MORE ON OUR HUMAN UNDERSTANDING LAB

A deeper human understanding is what UNLIMITED specialises in. Integrated across all our connected capabilities, our [Human Understanding Lab™](#) injects deep human insight into client briefs to solve challenges, define strategy, and drive performance across increasingly complex customer journeys.

Our 120-strong team of neuroscientists, behavioural scientists, data strategists, and trends specialists helps brands to build strategies around human beings that deliver superior business outcomes. In short, we ensure brands succeed in a fragmented, low-attention digital landscape by optimising the human experience.

OUR SUITE OF PRODUCTS →

Applying our Human Understanding Lab takes B2C and B2B brands to a new level of performance. We offer core packages to support specific projects or campaigns, prove the business return on investing in

human understanding or pilot the introduction of new insight techniques across neuroscience, behavioural science, or data science into your business.



**DECISION
DRIVERS**



**CREATIVE
CONNECTION**



**PULSE OF
THE NATION**



**HUMAN
UNDERSTANDING
MASTERCLASS**

MEET THE TEAM



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