



What's Hot?!

October 2024

Black History Month Special



Black History Month 2024: Learning, Sharing, and Celebrating Black Culture at the7stars

Black History Month provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the invaluable contributions of Black people in our industry and communities, while also educating our team on how we can grow as allies and stand up against inequality. As such, we seize this opportunity every year and introduce a range of initiatives and events for our team throughout October.

Aligning with this year's theme of 'Reclaiming Narratives', our Black History Month celebrations begin with a colourful and vibrant mural in our reception area, celebrating pivotal Black figures in history who have done just that. Crafted by [Julian ArtJaz](#), this year's mural features iconic figures such as Jessica Huntley (a pioneer in Black political and social activism), Shaka King (an acclaimed film director, screenwriter, and producer), Dame Jocelyn Barrow (a British educationalist, community activist, and the first Black female governor of the BBC), and many others.

Throughout the month, we will also feature educational lightboxes across our office, giving our team a constant opportunity to educate themselves, along with anti-racism training to equip them with the necessary tools to act in allyship and combat racism. Additionally, we have introduced our Black History Month Book Swap, fostering a culture of learning and understanding around the rich history of the Black community. With this initiative, we encourage our team to bring books written by Black authors that they enjoy and trade these books with others, allowing them to discover new authors, stories, and perspectives. Following this, participants are encouraged to share their reviews and thoughts about the books they have taken, giving our wider team insight into the amazing books they may read in the future.

We will also be reintroducing our annual Black History Month presentation this year, with Ije McDougall sharing her invaluable insights and passion for racial equality and the Black Lives Matter movement. With an extensive career in HR, governmental, and legal roles, and currently working as a Magistrate for the UK Ministry of Justice, Ije McDougall's lived experiences have paved the way for a unique perspective that we are excited to learn and grow from.

To round off our Black History Month celebrations, we will be hosting our legendary DJ Battles at the end of October, with two DJs going head-to-head, celebrating music by Black artists.



How the Industry can Combat the Decline in Representation in Advertising

As Black History Month approaches, the spotlight once again falls on how brands are engaging with representation in advertising. However, recent studies suggest that consumers, especially Black audiences, feel less represented in ads today. This article explores the declining sentiment around diversity in advertising and what brands can do to reverse the trend.

A Growing Disconnect in Representation

In recent years, there has been growing concern about the authenticity of Black representation in advertising. Although brands have made strides in highlighting diverse stories, recent reports show a decline in how well these portrayals resonate with Black audiences. A study by Channel 4 found that 51% of Black British respondents felt underrepresented in media and advertising. This disconnect has raised questions about whether brands are genuinely committed to diversity or simply riding the wave of performative activism during key moments like Black History Month. The gap between corporate intentions and consumer perception makes this a relevant and timely issue for advertisers.

The Reaction from Experts

Experts and industry thought leaders have voiced concerns about the superficial nature of some diversity campaigns. While brands like Nike and Coca-Cola have historically set the bar high with bold, inclusive ads, recent sentiment shows a mixed reaction. Thought leaders emphasize the need for year-round commitment to Black representation, not just during celebratory months like Black History Month, urging brands to long-term commitments with Black-owned businesses and creators as a more authentic approach.

Implications for the Future of Advertising

This decline in perceived representation has significant implications for advertisers. If brands fail to engage authentically with Black audiences, they risk losing trust and relevance, especially among younger consumers. For clients in advertising, the message is clear: representation must be multifaceted, authentic, and sustained throughout the year. Initiatives like the UK Advertising Association's, Black Representation in Marketing (BRiM) program, aim to increase Black representation in marketing and media. BRiM provides tools and resources to help brands include more Black voices at every level, from production to campaign strategy. Brands that succeed in this space will be the ones that listen to diverse voices and embed those perspectives into every facet of their campaigns.

The future of Black representation in advertising hinges on brands' commitment to authentic, year-round diversity efforts. Advertisers must move beyond token gestures and genuinely embrace inclusion. How will your brand ensure inclusivity moving forward?



The Unexpected Rise of Actual Reality

In a year that has already seen records for live music events smashed by Taylor Swift (a bar set high by Beyonce last year), Oasis announced their own slew of dates for 2025 and outstripped the Swifties in the UK with [1.4 million tickets sold](#) across the UK and Ireland (and 14 million fans having tried to buy tickets).

Festivals of all kinds continue to increase in number and scale and podcasts like *The Rest is Politics* and *Off Menu* leverage their huge audiences by booking arena venues for live specials. Even the cast of *People Just Do Nothing* - a relatively modest sitcom - have a fully booked stadium tour underway. Travis Scott, one of the first artists to embrace the idea of the Metaverse with his 'in-game' event in Fortnite in 2021 has this year broken his own record for a ticketed event by playing to 48,000 fans in Tottenham's Stadium, netting over 5 million on a wet Wednesday night in north London. Even the virtual simulated Abba have passed up on being virtual and gone live.

Events of all kinds have never been more popular or more prolific in the UK. A combination of a continued improvement and investment in venues plus a bit of post-lockdown liberation means that now more than ever, bands, brands and fans can get together *IRL*.

'In Real Life' has become a scenario for which we already have an abbreviation. Reality is noteworthy and precious, with good reason. In a post-truth world, with fake news, paid influencers, generative AI and openly biased media platforms, people simply don't know what's true and what they shouldn't trust when it's on a screen, which covers practically everything.

Conversely, if we see something with our own eyes or hear it or feel it live, it happened. Whether it's Burning Man, or the Olympic Games, being there matters because our brains inscribe visceral experiences much more deeply than simulated ones. Our lived memories will always override 'reported' memories.

It's no coincidence that as live experiences burgeon, mass uptake of AR/VR headsets has underwhelmed its bullish investors. Decentraland, one of the most well-funded Metaverse products, had only around 38 active daily users in its \$1.3 billion ecosystem.

Zuckerberg's 'Reality Labs' has lost at least [\\$46.5 billion since 2019](#).

Harvard Business Review recently reported that [AI's emerging trust problem](#) compounds the challenge facing a business sector built on hype. As impressive and useful as all these things are, they're not going to shrink Glastonbury's gate sales.

Clients and agencies would do well to balance their understanding of what's new, exciting and technically possible with what people are demonstrably doing more of, which is living in the moment or, as Oasis will put it to over a million of us shortly, 'Be Here Now'.



Consumers Eyeing Small Treats as Cost-of-Living Pressures Ease

Consumers are now allowing themselves to buy more premium products and small treats, [according to new shopper data](#) from Kantar.

Sales of premium own-label products at Aldi were up 16% year-on-year and [other supermarkets also announced](#) growth in sales of more premium products, including a 12.5% uplift for Tesco's Finest range.

The recent trend indicates a part-reversal of consumer shopping habits compared to when high inflation first hit the UK in early 2022. At the time, [analysts noted](#) that Brits were 'trading down' their shopping habits, switching to more discount stores and own-label value products.

Despite this, the cost-of-living crisis is not yet over as UK inflation remains above the Bank of England's target at 2.2% but the supermarket category remains a beacon of hope.

The food and drinks category can be viewed as a barometer measuring the nation's financial outlook and, with food prices starting to fall, some are beginning to feel optimistic.

Such optimism is evident in our latest State of the Nation report, with 35% of Brits feeling happier than they did a year ago (a 3%pt rise since May). Attitudes towards personal income also showed improvement, with a 4%pt decline in those feeling less comfortable about their financial situation.

With the new government in place, attitudes towards Britain's institutions also showed significant improvement – although overall opinions of financial institutions and the Government remain negative.

With consumers increasingly willing to treat themselves to things that make them feel good, brands have an opportunity to convince shoppers of the merits of 'trading up' to their products.

However, these trends should be treated with caution. As food price increases become less frequent, consumers remain vigilant about inflation and shrinkflation in their regular baskets – and may be turned off by brands they perceive as taking advantage of their cash.

Furthermore, while premium own-label ranges appear to be thriving, a large contingent of the UK relies on value ranges to get by, and [recent moves by retailers](#) to restrict the availability of budget products risk leaving these shoppers behind. As Winter approaches, retailers must offer a balanced product range that caters to all types of shoppers' needs – targeting them with savings where they are needed most.

If the food and drink category is to be a bellwether, consumer confidence is finally returning to the UK after two-and-a-half difficult years of the cost-of-living crisis. However, as recent experience suggests, such confidence is highly volatile. Now, more than ever, it is critical for brands to understand the full spectrum of needs and budgets of their customers.



The Rise of Sports Fandom and how this has affected TV and Streaming Services

Ever-increasing globalisation, digitalisation, and commercialisation have expanded sports fandom beyond its traditional terrains. Sports teams now enjoy worldwide support from highly engaged audiences, who seize extra chances to connect with their teams. This creates an appealing target audience for streaming services, who look to capitalise on the limitations of traditional broadcasters, such as geographical boundaries and licensing agreements.

Streaming platforms seek to engage fans beyond live broadcasts by offering sports lifestyle content, such as documentaries. Netflix's 'Drive to Survive' demonstrates how this content can expand fanbases, with a female viewership of 46%, despite 70% of regular F1 fans being male. By tapping into an already highly engaged audience, streaming services have successfully appealed to wider demographics in an ever-evolving fandom.

Sport remains one of the few reliable sources of televised entertainment that regularly draws large audiences. Although broadcast TV is still the most popular channel for sports in the UK, there's been a notable shift towards streaming, with SVOD penetration more than tripling between 2015 and 2023. This adoption reflects global changes in consumer habits, where sports compete with other forms of entertainment.

Younger viewers follow more sports than their older counterparts but with a heavy preference towards streaming and mobile experiences. Fans aged 25-34 are the most digitally savvy, making up the highest portion of SVOD subscribers (39%). Meanwhile, less than 50% of 16-24-year-olds now watch linear TV in a typical week and also consume the most VOD content. The Global Sports Media Report shows that 34% of 18-24-year-olds watch game highlights, compared with just 30% watching full games (28% do both). This behaviour reflects the younger generation's preference for short-form content.

According to Nielsen and LaLiga Tech, 41% of global sports fans already watch some sporting events via OTT platforms, with 47% using both TV and streaming services simultaneously. This suggests that streaming (highlights or otherwise) has created additional windows for consuming sports, rather than replacing traditional channels.

As the industry matures, platforms and broadcasters will need to adapt to the fluidity of today's sports fans. The rise of streaming, driven by high-end drama, is now complemented by lifestyle content and cross-platform bundle deals, such as Disney+ with ESPN and Discovery+ with TNT Sports.

With the Six Nations TV deal expiring in 2025 and the government rejecting calls to protect it for free-to-air TV, rugby could be the next sport poised for expansion. Following the success of Netflix's 'Full Contact' documentary and Amazon Prime's broadcast of the 2022 Autumn Internationals, it remains to be seen whether streaming can replicate this success or if TV will retain its dominance in live broadcasting.



European CTV Use Reaches 86% as Younger Audiences Lead Shift

A recent study by ShowHeroes Group and Kinesso reveals that connected TV (CTV) usage in Europe has surged to 86%, up six percentage points from 2022. The UK boasts a 91% penetration rate, second only to Spain. The study, which spanned six European markets, highlights a growing preference for CTV, especially among younger viewers. In the UK, 39% report watching only CTV, compared to just 9% who rely solely on linear TV. Content preferences vary, with CTV dominating for films, TV shows, and short videos, while linear TV remains popular for live sports and news. Younger audiences are driving the shift, with 25% of 18-34-year-olds exclusively using CTV.



TfL Renews Advertising Contracts with Global and JCDecaux

Transport for London (TfL) has extended its partnerships with Global and JCDecaux for another eight years. Global retains the largest UK out-of-home (OOH) advertising contract, covering Underground, Overground, and Elizabeth line stations, among others. This marks a 40-year relationship between Global (formerly Exterion Media) and TfL. Meanwhile, JCDecaux continues its bus shelter advertising contract, covering over 4,700 shelters across 33 London boroughs. Both companies play a key role in generating significant revenue for TfL, with over £150 million brought in last year through commercial media.



September Box Office Sees 21% Boost, Driven by Beetlejuice Sequel

UK and Ireland box office revenue for September surpassed £60m, representing a 21% increase compared to September 2023, according to Comscore. While year-to-date figures remain 10% behind last year, this is an improvement from August's 12% deficit. Tom Linay, content business director at Digital Cinema Media (DCM), noted that September is typically a slow month for cinema due to fewer new releases. However, this year's box office was buoyed by the success of *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, which held the top spot for four consecutive weeks, earning £21.6m. Other notable releases include *Speak No Evil* (£4.4m) and *Lee* (£3.1m).