

ANALYSIS, OPINIONS, MARKETING

Darren Woolley | 4 days ago

An AI lens on the marketing headaches of 2024

Privacy fracas, economic turmoil, and an attention-fleeting digital world—Trinity P3 founder and chief executive Darren Woolley asked AI to prioritise the pain points that dominated marketing agendas across Asia-Pacific in 2024. Here's his take.



Photo: Shutterstock, altered by AI

Forget the Year of Mobile – we're living in the decade of AI. Artificial intelligence of all types, not just the generative type, has continued to be the talk of marketing for the past 12 months. Therefore, to reflect this trend, I asked AI to provide me with the top ten marketing issues and challenges, ranked from most to least important, particularly for the Asia-Pacific region.

As part of the experiment, I trained the AI with access to my subscription to Campaign to ensure a focus on marketing, media and advertising. While the AI output was informative, it typically lacked context and nuance, which I have added.

In Asia, many problems and challenges facing marketing and advertising globally in the past 12 months are equally relevant. However, the specific context and impact can vary by country and region. So, here are the challenges identified and ranked by AI:

- 1. Privacy regulations and data protection:** While GDPR and CCPA set the agenda for consumer privacy, countries like China, India, and others are implementing stricter data protection laws similar to Europe and the USA, making compliance a significant challenge for marketers. Take for example the Personal Data Protection Bill in India, which is expected to be implemented in 2025, it will have far-reaching consequences for how companies collect, process, and store consumer data. This, combined with questionable quality third-party data sources, means marketers are looking to synthetic data as an alternative option.
- 2. Consumer behaviour shifts:** While it may feel like the pandemic is behind us, the lingering effects have accelerated changes in consumer behaviour across Asia. There has been a notable increase in e-commerce and digital engagement, necessitating quick adaptation by brands. While the pandemic has disrupted markets globally, the most significant disruption and impact on consumer behaviour is economic, with inflation and the cost-of-living top of mind.
- 3. Digital transformation:** Many countries in the region are experiencing rapid digital growth, and brands are pressured to enhance their digital capabilities to meet consumer expectations, combined with the need to adapt to new technologies, such as integrating AI into existing technology platforms, requires significant investment. For instance, Tata Motors, one of India's largest automotive manufacturers, has announced a major investment in digital transformation, including the integration of AI into its production and supply chain processes. The unanswered question remains: is this investment delivering the expected payback?
- 4. Ad fatigue and consumer attention:** With the saturation of online content, consumers are becoming increasingly de-sensitised to advertising, making it harder for brands to capture attention. This proliferation of digital content should see marketers being more creatively courageous to cut through the clutter.
- 5. Measurement and attribution:** Determining the effectiveness of marketing campaigns across various channels remains a complex challenge, especially with the growing reliance on multi-channel marketing. Is it any wonder we are seeing increased investment and interest in applying AI to marketing mix models (MMM) for attribution and predictive decision-making?
- 6. Supply chain disruptions:** Global supply chain issues have affected product availability and delivery, impacting marketing strategies and customer satisfaction, not just globally but across Asian markets, impacting marketing strategies. However, supply chain issues have also been the excuse for increased costs, delivering significant profit margins to companies and driving the cost-of-living crisis.
- 7. Sustainability and ethical marketing:** Awareness of sustainability and ethical practices, particularly among younger Asian consumers, pushes brands to address these concerns. However, while the economic and cost of living crisis continues, the focus could be more mundane, such as paying bills and putting food on the table.
- 8. Talent acquisition and retention:** The marketing industry faces talent shortages, with difficulties finding skilled professionals in digital marketing and data analytics. However, if more effort was put into making marketing roles more attractive, this could quickly be addressed.
- 9. Rising advertising costs:** It is not just the increased demand for digital ad space that has driven up costs and



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challenging budgets and ROI for many brands. But then again, the price of everything is going up, including the reported margins of many of the publicly listed companies.

10. Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity: Asia is the most culturally diverse region globally, and brands must continue to navigate these complexities carefully to avoid miscommunication and ensure their messaging resonates across different cultural contexts ensuring their messaging resonates without offending. Even though rising nationalism and economic tightening show signs of dampening these concerns.

Were these your top marketing issues in 2024? Did the AI miss anything crucial? Or is the ranking askew? For me, the important lesson of 2024 was this: while AI is an invaluable tool, we're still far from replacing human beings in the most human of business disciplines – understanding what drives, motivates, and inspires us. These insights are integral to successful marketing, and while machines may get there one day, they haven't cracked that code just yet.

Perhaps the AI should have ranked "understanding the unpredictable human psyche" as marketers' greatest challenge in 2024. After all, even the most advanced algorithms struggle to comprehend the whimsical, irrational, and often paradoxical nature of human behaviour—the very essence that makes marketing both an art and a science. Machines may soon master the science, but the art will likely elude them for some time yet.

By Darren Woolley, founder and global CEO of Trinity P3, a marketing management consultancy. He is a regular Campaign Asia columnist, penning the monthly "Woolley on Marketing" column.

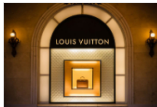
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