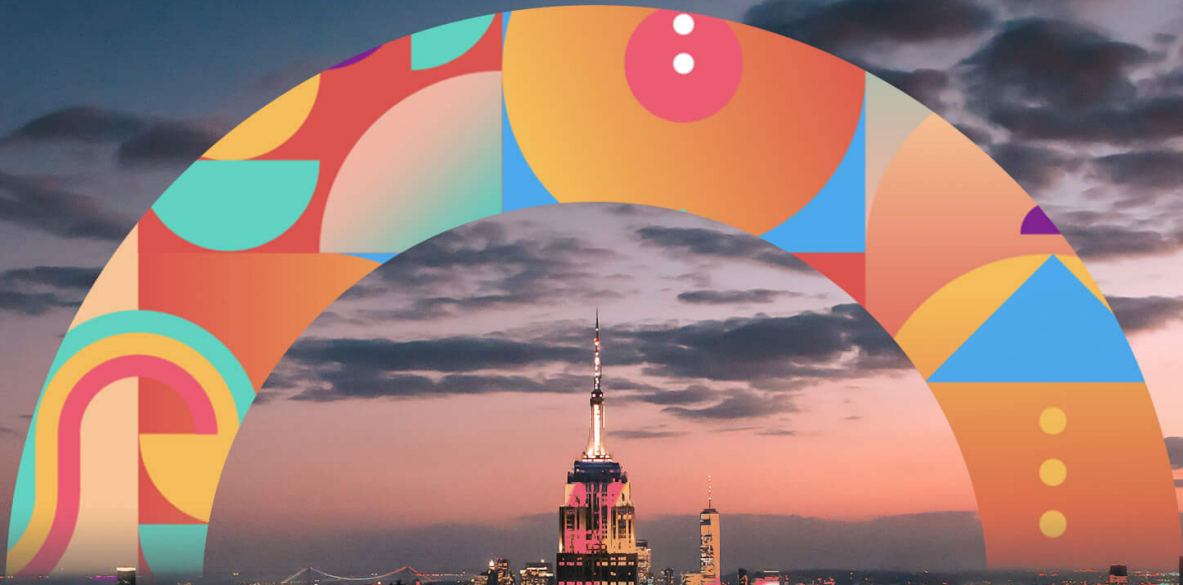




THE PENN DISTRICT



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COMMERCE

Trend Report

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The Power of Authenticity and Connected Commerce



Margaux Logan
SVP Head of Marketplaces
Publicis Commerce

Advertising Week, as always, attracted a diverse range of content and attendees from across the media, brand, and creative industries, with key themes recurring throughout the panels. This year there was a strong focus on CTV, AI, and data-driven discussions. Two key themes stood out: first, the importance of brand building at every stage of the marketing journey, and second, the effectiveness of centering the consumer in this process. Whether through insights, audience targeting, or experiential marketing, it is essential for marketers to leverage their understanding of consumers to tailor and curate impactful campaigns.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Authenticity is Paramount: Brands cannot expect consumers to engage with content they haven't earned the right to deliver. Much discussion focused on the constant drive for brands to capitalize on the cultural zeitgeist, especially on social media. However, not every brand needs to be everywhere. It's important to weigh the value of being in popular spaces against what genuinely resonates with consumers. While this isn't a new topic for marketers, it remains crucial as new touchpoints emerge. Brands must know their audience, be clear about why they're entering a conversation, and avoid trends or memes that feel inauthentic.

Interoperability is Key: Brands should focus on how their channels interact. For Retail Media Networks (RMNs) new to the space, understanding the wealth of data they possess—especially through loyalty programs—is essential. The ultimate goal is a holistic view of the consumer, whether they are online, in-app, or in-store. RMNs need to leverage this deep understanding to build personalized experiences tailored to each touchpoint. By making touchpoints interoperable and connected, brands simplify the experience for consumers. The goal is to deliver dynamic, complementary—not intrusive—messaging and offers. Consumers expect that with the vast amount of data brands have, marketing will feel specific to them. However, many brands still struggle to effectively use cross-channel data. The hope is that brands and agencies will eventually leverage this connectivity, leading to better measurement, more relevant content, and meeting consumers where they truly are—not just where brands think they are. For commerce media, the aim should be diversified platforms paired with matching experiences.

Connected Commerce is the Rule, Not the Exception: Building on the previous point, with the many ways brands now understand consumers, there is an expectation that communications will reflect that understanding. A fully developed, always-on strategy is essential for driving business. Colleen Hotchkiss of Zenith discussed driving real-time brand impact using three key strategies: audience understanding (including leveraging creators that truly resonate), breakthrough creative, and continuously interpreting signals to serve the right messaging and products at the right time and place. This highlights the importance of recognizing the consumer's "trip mission" at each touchpoint, whether it's a channel or retailer. By creating a connected path, brands remove barriers to purchase.

Advertising Week 2024 had great content, excellent and varied speakers and plenty of opportunities to learn. The challenge, as always, lies in translating those insights into actionable strategies. Finding the right partners who are open to testing and learning isn't always easy. However, the consistent messaging throughout the week serves as a hopeful stepping stone for marketers looking to put these ideas into practice. If you're seeking a true commerce partner, and one independently verified as a [leader in commerce](#), don't hesitate to [get in touch!](#)

New Shopping Experiences Take Center Stage



Susie McKeon
Senior Associate, Commerce Media Strategy
Publicis Commerce

Advertising Week 2024 marked a milestone—its 20th anniversary—and brought together marketers from across the industry to reflect on two decades of innovation and evolution. It was not just a celebration of past successes but also an opportunity to connect, collaborate, and look ahead at the emerging trends shaping the future. Attendees engaged in deep discussions around the challenges and opportunities on the horizon, with a focus on how brands can continue to stay ahead in an ever-changing landscape.

One of the standout themes this year was the evolution of shopping experiences, particularly through retail media networks and commerce media. Moving beyond the buzzwords, leaders explored how these platforms are now reshaping industries outside of retail and how privacy-first strategies are becoming essential for maintaining trust with consumers. Marketers are no longer just building campaigns—they're transforming how consumers experience every touchpoint of their shopping journey, from discovery to checkout.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Retail Media Goes Beyond Retail: While retail media networks have transformed the way retailers connect with shoppers, they're also opening doors for non-endemic brands in industries like travel and entertainment. These brands can tap into shopper data to build nuanced consumer profiles, enabling highly targeted campaigns outside of traditional channels. This crossover allows companies to reach new audiences in unexpected places, proving that retail media's real power lies in its ability to create diverse, cross-industry growth opportunities.

Non-Disruptive Checkout Experiences Are Essential: The checkout process is evolving, and it's more than just a functional transaction. Leaders at Advertising Week emphasized the need for a seamless, relevant, and non-intrusive checkout experience. Brands are now using commerce media tools like Afterpay and CashApp to make purchasing faster, while ensuring promotions are subtle and tailored. The goal? Keep shoppers engaged without overwhelming them with ads. For marketers, it's a reminder to focus on relevance over personalization and to use data to inform the right moments, rather than adding friction.

Responsible Data Utilization is the Future: Balancing the fine line between data privacy and targeted marketing has become crucial. With increasing data regulations, marketers must rethink how they collect and use data. Sessions like "Paradox No More: Embracing Privacy to Drive Performance" highlighted how data clean rooms and privacy-first strategies can drive performance without crossing ethical boundaries. The takeaway is clear: compliance isn't just about following rules—it's about building trust while maintaining the effectiveness of campaigns.

Unified KPIs: Bridging Branding and Sales: A shift toward unified KPIs was a recurring theme at Advertising Week, as brands struggle to align short-term performance with long-term brand building. Retail media networks offer a solution by providing real-time data that tracks both conversions and brand sentiment. By focusing on a single set of KPIs that measure both immediate and future goals, businesses can ensure a more cohesive approach to media planning and execution, bringing all stakeholders on the same page.

Brand Love Is in the Air



Dani Mariano
President
Razorfish

Advertising Week 2024 covered many themes, but what caught my attention were conversations around the balance of brand and performance. Brands have responded to today's customer experience journey with a relentless focus on performance marketing. Unfortunately, we see that the absence of brand marketing is having an impact. Building brand love isn't just about measuring results. It's about creating genuine relationships with your audiences, giving them ownership and delivering unforgettable experiences. It was refreshing to see the conversation shifting in this direction throughout the event.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The puzzle for each brand will be different, but the relationship between brand and performance cannot be underestimated. As customer journeys become increasingly more complex, the way brand initiatives are designed has to constantly evolve to be across the entire user experience to effectively drive performance.
- When consumers experience brand love and are given ownership through a two-way relationship, they often become advocates, naturally promoting the brand across a wide range of interactions and channels. It's an authentic boost to visibility backed by credibility and trust.
- Most importantly, creating brands that consumers love should be centered on why the brand exists, especially with Gen Z. As marketers think about finding and solving gaps for their customers, it's important to discern when to listen and when to lead.



The Balance of Building Brand & Driving Performance



Sophie Tahiraj
Associate Director, Commerce Media
Digitas

Advertising Week NY sessions covered a wide range of topics and featured industry leaders, including Digitas CEO Amy Lanzi and Chief Solutions Officer Melissa Berger. Lifetime value (LTV) and loyalty were key themes throughout the event, with discussions focused on how brands can foster long-term loyalty while still driving immediate results. As the modern consumer journey evolves, the challenge for marketers is balancing loyalty with performance.

For marketing and advertising professionals, finding the right balance between brand building and performance is crucial. This balance must come to life across planning, measurement, and organizational structure.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Moments that Move Hearts Can Drive Sales Too: “Are We Branding or Selling Today?” was both the title of Amy Lanzi’s session as well as a question echoed throughout the event. The answer? It’s a balance. Branding and performance efforts must work hand-in-hand. Brands need to stay contextually relevant to win, while also gaining precise insights into how consumers engage with their products. In both media and creative, informed decisions must be made, with a focus on an “and” rather than an “or” approach.

The Challenge of Measuring Lifetime Value: Loyalty is all about lifetime value, but measuring it remains a challenge. With varying approaches to LTV, no universal model has emerged. Brands are left trying to connect clicks and impressions to lifetime value. Solving this equation will empower brands to make larger business decisions and better understand how media metrics affect customer segmentation. A networked approach from the beginning across commerce, media, and CRM will enable tracking insights that truly matter for long-term success.

Balancing long term and short-term goals is important. Organizations need to carefully consider the role of LTV in their strategies, asking how much they are willing to invest in winning customers and determining the right channel mixes to sustain loyalty. It’s not just about short-term metrics—brands must remind customers why they love the brand, building long-term equity and loyalty while balancing this with performance goals.

Evolving Modern Marketing: As marketing evolves, so must planning. Understanding your audience is as important as ever, but it’s also critical to challenge assumptions and avoid bias. Instead of only relying on what we know about target audiences, brands should plan holistically across channels and categories to remain relevant. ▶

The Balance of Building Brand & Driving Performance

KEY TAKEAWAYS - Continued

Use retail data signals. Retail signals, at their core, represent a person and their buying behaviors and can be indicative of surrounding events happening in the person's life. Brands should use retail signals to learn how consumers engage with their own brand in the full marketing picture. Precise retail data at scale is a huge unlock in making investment decisions, across media and creative, to drive better business outcomes. It can also be a resource to build a more personalized approach to loyalty and lifetime value.

Loyalty and Organizational Design: The degree to which marketing influences shopper behavior is impacted by organizational design. Success comes when decisions are driven by brand goals and customer experiences, not by budget silos. National and retail teams should align, creating integrated marketing plans that unite brand building and performance goals.

To achieve this, organizations should adopt a single set of KPIs and work toward a unified approach with retail partners, avoiding duplicated efforts across the business. Relationship and loyalty strategies must be woven throughout the entire organization—from commerce to media and CRM. Retention should be just as important as acquisition—once a shopper is won, the focus should shift to building long-term relationships and lifetime value.

Want to learn more about building successful loyalty programs? Be sure to [get in touch](#) and don't miss the [Digita Spilling the LoyalTea](#) podcast for more insights on creating lasting customer relationships. ♦





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