

Cannes 2024

The annual Cannes Lions Festival of International Creativity took place June 17-21 in Cannes, France, bringing the advertising and communication industries together to celebrate the best global work, exchange insights, inspire new ideas and share thought leadership.

The blending of commerce and creativity has grown in importance over the years and gained more prominence at the festival – and this year was no exception, with commerce being a hot topic on and off the mainstage. Partner and client discussions in various forums centered on the future of commerce, and we saw more retailers having a presence at this year's festival. We talked about how data and AI will transform shopping as we know it and how channels and experiences today aren't just creative – they're truly connected, measurable and able to drive brand outcomes.

Several Publicis Commerce leads attended this year. Here are some of their thoughts on core themes and takeaways from the event.

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Creative Commerce

from the Jury Floor





Amy Lanzi CEO Digitas

This year, I had the honor to serve as the Jury President of the Cannes Lions Creative Commerce category. What originally began as a creative ecommerce category has evolved into "Creative Commerce," signifying the comprehensive nature of the work across the entire spectrum of commerce.

It's a fascinating time to be in our industry. As a collective, we have always prided ourselves on creativity in commerce, but today, the opportunity for creative commerce is more impressive than ever. Channels and experiences are not just creative—they are truly connected, measurable, and profoundly impactful. We are living in a time where it is possible to build brands and drive business results all at once.

In today's connected commerce landscape, our work must enable brands to serve, not just to sell to consumers. No matter your industry— automotive, consumer goods, or B2B—the shared goal is to win hearts through marketing innovation while driving commercial value. This requires mastery of evolving trends and harnessing customer and consumer mindsets.

I witnessed several key trends emerging from the category entries:

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Community Commerce Drives Results: Community commerce is thriving both online and offline, blending traditional and modern approaches to community engagement and commitment to solving a human need that drives business.

Content + Commerce: The convergence of content and commerce has empowered brands to create engaging, multi-channel experiences that drive both favorability and sales. This also sets up new platforms, like a delivery app that can become a content distribution channel.

Real-Time Commerce: More seamless and real-time commerce opportunities enable brands to capitalize on cultural moments that can deliver immediate sales impact.





Marketers & Publishers Can Forge

the Path Away from Siloed Channels





Mike Ng President, Global and New Market Expansion **Epsilon**

Fragmentation of channels, identity protocol, and customer data make it harder for marketers and publishers to have a more holistic view of the consumer. This was apparent at Cannes once again this year, as brand marketers and publishers continue to try to solve for this and crack the code.

Even with a comprehensive understanding of the consumers a brand may want to engage, their efforts to drive sales while building stronger brand relationships will fall short if they can't engage those people with a single voice across channels in the moment and over time. Legacy technologies, mix-and-match tech stacks and the divide between adtech and martech make that much easier said than done. So, how do we actually solve for this?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Stop Walting for Third-Party Cookle Deprecation: Make your changes today. A recent survey of marketers found that 73% are concerned they won't be able to do "people-based advertising" after Google deprecates third-party cookies (3PCs) in Chrome. And they're not wrong: the inability for marketers to easily port their data across marketing channels has eroded a consumer's experience with brands, as well as the measurable effectiveness of campaigns—but identifier deprecation is already happening and has been happening for some time now. Marketers should look for solutions that can better connect their brand to customers across channels without needing to use third-party identifiers. As an industry, we must find a more interconnected lexicon to address this so that value can be created both within the ecosystem and for consumers.

Rethink Your Data Strategy: Each marketer, publisher, and channel holds unique first-party customer data. However, this is all siloed today while they individually attempt to make their data more actionable. The reality is today's modern marketing campaign is fueled by data, specifically customer data. To make marketing more effective, all sides must reevaluate how they approach data and, critically, their concept of "identity" across to look at it more broadly than just their link in the chain. This means looking at customer data holistically—data collection, cleansing, organization, and governance—and rethinking how information flows in and out of adtech and martech platforms and through to publishers and partners.

Link Your Online and Offline Data: The most valuable method for any siloed data to generate more value is to be able to tie this to the offline world, forming a more well-rounded digital and non-digital view of a person. Holistically, this gives you one, unified view of a person across all channels to leverage for marketing purposes. When done well, this view not only helps you better understand your current customers but also helps you better understand your universe of potential buyers. And that is worth whatever internal or external lift it takes.





Conversations Converge

in a Redefining Industry





Josh Campo CEO Razorfish

As the dust settles from this year's festival, main themes emerge. Perhaps the clearest is that a connection must be drawn between the informal conversations happening on the beach to the traditional creative work on which our industry has built its reputation. While much of the work represents traditional creative—with just 12% of Cannes award entries in 2024 using Al—the vast majority of conversations happening on the sponsored beaches and fringe event panels were wrestling with the future: data, emerging tech, Al, and more.

Much of the work earning recognition in the Palais seems, at the very least, self-aware that marketing is facing a moment of reinvention. As the festival drew to a close, the conversations seemed to align on a shared truth: brands that hope to remain relevant must embrace the changing times and remain focused on the human behind the numbers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

AI – From Theoretical to Tactical: Although it was a hot topic in 2023, the conversation this year centered on how industry leaders should lean into responsible use of artificial intelligence, what models we want to train on and how to contribute to a future with unbiased data and generative outputs. There's still a lot of work to do in this space, but we, as an industry, are moving from high level discussions on usage to how we put AI into practice to better serve our businesses and their clients/customers.

Industry In Transformation: While Cannes Lion winners may have been heralded as provocative deviations from the norm, they still represented traditional creative overall. DoorDash is one example, taking home a Titanium Lion for the way it represented an overhaul of its business model despite coming to life in a very traditional medium, a Super Bowl ad. Wins like this suggest that even the mainstage is aware that the industry must adapt alongside of our business partners.

Everything is Commerce, and Everything is Creative: It's tempting to distinguish our work into categories like retail or social, but they often converge into one brand experience. Finding ways to deliver unified commerce experiences continues to be an important topic as brands explore effective strategies for shoppable content and loyalty programs. In turn, consumers get to know a cohesive brand instead of a fragmented one.

Authenticity Performs: We often talk about authenticity in clichés because it's difficult to measure, even when inauthenticity is easily recognized. Many, if not all, of the Cannes Lions winners were an authentic and relevant manifestation of a brand's purpose. While authenticity tied to a higher purpose tends to win big, like Grand Prix winner ORANGE by Publicis Marcel, others like More Tide remind us that authenticity need not always be serious. This showed up differently on the fringe of Cannes, with marketing leaders spanning retail to insurance and beyond exploring the ways modern brands must stay true to decades—sometimes even a century—of brand legacy.





Connecting Creativity and Commerce: Selling is Cool Again





Colleen Kelly
SVP Strategy
Saatchi & Saatchi X

Conversion-driving big ideas have entered the chat. With more commerce-centric content than ever before, this year's Cannes experience delivered a whole new level of relevance, inspiration, and, in true commerce fashion, a call to action to redefine its role in the marketing mix. While this may not be news to those of us who've been here the whole time, the message was clear: brands can tackle big problems through commerce channels with the right strategies that make sense for the shopper, brand, and retailer.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Going Back to Basics: While there was some hot debate on which is more important, revisiting the relationship between product and message emerged as a key theme in this year's talks and the work. Winning cases showed how product feeds the message, and sometimes message can inspire a product. Either way, culture presents unlimited inspiration, we just need to take cues from it, and apply in the right contexts. Data grounds smarter, more precise activation, but the most compelling creative ideas still hinge on cultural insight.

Personalization at Scale, Powered by Al: Unsurprisingly, Al was the talk of the town, but the conversation has evolved into practical application that supports the human-powered creative process from ideation to execution. Alpowered interactive audience personas can help us more intimately understand audiences, opening possibilities to develop truly personalized and highly-relevant content on a more individual level. Predictive analytics to forecast customer behavior and preferences will enable marketers to tailor content and marketing campaigns to individual needs and interests. And the future of A/B testing and optimization holds promise in faster, more nimble actions for better engagement and conversions.

Entertainment Applies to Commerce, Too: Within this increasingly fragmented commerce landscape, marketers must reframe the role of creative and content from delivering informative messages to telling engaging stories that spark an emotional response. Entertaining content has the power to evoke emotions, such as joy, excitement, nostalgia, or empathy, which can create strong emotional connections with consumers. While we may like to think our actions are motivated by purely rational motivations, research shows that the key to behavior change is activating on emotion.





Creativity

in Commerce





Christa Klausner SVP Commerce Digitas

Retail Media Networks (and beyond) were out in full force at Cannes this year! Many of the discussions focused on how brands and agencies are using retail data and creativity to improve decision making and performance. As several partners leveraged Cannes as their big stage to announce new partnerships, capability expansion, and even media networks launching beyond retail, I saw two key themes emerge:

- **Creativity in Commerce:** Together, brands and agencies are using data to inform creative decisions like CTA, photography, and selecting which brands to feature together due to high propensity to cross-sell. But more importantly than just the creative of the ad units themselves is the creativity that goes into the user experience—the seamless integration of moving from consideration to purchase without disrupting the user journey. We're starting to see more and more retailer and media platform integrations powering shoppable ads. For example, Instacart's launch of their retail media data extension to YouTube; *The New York Times*' Cooking recipes now instantly shoppable with Instacart; and Kroger Precision Marketing's (KPM) new Meta advertising capabilities, personalizing product recommendations and optimizing performance toward online Kroger sales.
- **Expansion Beyond Retail:** The rapid emergence of new media networks is no longer focused on just retailers, and we're seeing more Travel, Entertainment and Financial media networks enter the space. The proliferation of data and media networks is causing a very complex landscape to navigate for endemic and non-endemic brands.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Focus on Differentiation: It's critical for existing and emerging media networks to move beyond datasets and focus on truly differentiated offerings, exceptional customer service, transparency in performance, and competitive pricing to be able to compete and sustain in the media industry.

Prioritize Partner Collaborations: As retail media continues to evolve, it's imperative that we put our partner collaborations at the heart of it all. We should embrace a data-driven approach, intertwining creative optimization and AI to deliver super personalized customer experiences.

Leverage Media Data as a Dynamic Bridge: Link audiences, creative campaigns, and commerce to drive smarter consumer experiences and superior business outcomes.





From Insights & Inspiration

to Activation & the Joy of Shopping





Colleen Hotchkiss
President, Growth Practices
Zenith

All along the Croissette this year, conversations and partner activations were abuzz with talk of commerce, retail media and shoppable experiences. The general consensus was that commerce was second only to Al in terms of the themes that were capturing marketers' and the greater industry's attention, with Cannes firsttimers like Kroger Precision Marketing joining this year; key announcements like CVS's new self-service capabilities; as well as partners like Beet.TV dedicating entire days of content discussing commerce and retail media.

Whether participating in panel discussions, partner connects or meetings with clients, one of the common threads that I found myself discussing often was the power that commerce and retail media have in providing business driving insights, a wealth of inspiration to consumers and brands alike, and last but not least— the ability to bring back the joy of shopping to the consumer experience.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Retailer Data Continues to Be One of the Most Powerful Tools in our Marketing Toolkits: Understanding how consumers are shopping, what and where they are buying and leveraging that data should be used not only to optimize our performance media, but also to garner audience insights upstream. This data can help brands identify white spaces and new opportunities or affinities to drive their business. Using retailer data and insights both upstream and down in your plans can unlock distinctive results.

Frictionless Experiences are Key: With the increase in shoppability of all media, be it CTV or your favorite social feed, every consumer touchpoint offers an opportunity to drive to purchase. As marketers lean into these opportunities, making the experience as personal and frictionless as possible, will be the key to success. Brands that win will meet consumers where they are and make it easy for them to choose us, when and where the moment strikes.

There is Joy in Shopping IRL: As much as ecommerce and online shopping continues to rise, physical, in-store retail still accounts for over 80% of retail sales (per eMarketer's 2024 US Retail Sales forecasts). Whether it was Instacart's Caper Carts gamifying shopping carts, to new, interactive media offerings in Walmart stores, or the potential that AR/VR are bringing to try-on, shopping IRL is becoming more fun again. These new offerings offer great opportunities for brands to build a relationship, hone in on their first-party data and importantly inspire a purchase.







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