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A Click Consult whitepaper

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# Search & Digital Marketing Trends

*Marketing Trends Report (Q1 2022)*

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# Introduction

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It's been a while since our last marketing trends report, and a lot has happened since 2019. We'd struggle not to mention the Covid-19 pandemic that swept throughout the world and how it may have affected marketing trends - at the time of writing this, our rules in the UK have been relaxed but there's other incredibly substantial news going on in the world that may impact on global marketing strategies.

The pandemic focused our attention on what matters, and what should take priority. In the UK we clapped for the NHS and communities were brought together. However, more questionable trends were seen and we looked to Netflix to supply them in the form of Joe Exotic's "Tiger King" and the reality dating show, "Love is Blind".

We held out hope for Q1 of 2022, with positive Covid-19 results decreasing and regulations ending, but an invasion reared its ugly head in February with the whole world watching how it will unfold.

This whitepaper will look at the first quarter of 2022 and how outside influences have affected the marketing industry. It will look at budget and technologies, and the state of the industry to date.

## Digital Marketing & ad spend

The last couple of years has seen an enormous shift to digital transformation, adapting to a constantly changing hybrid and virtual environment. With restrictions ending, industries expected sharper dips in web traffic and ultimately, sales.

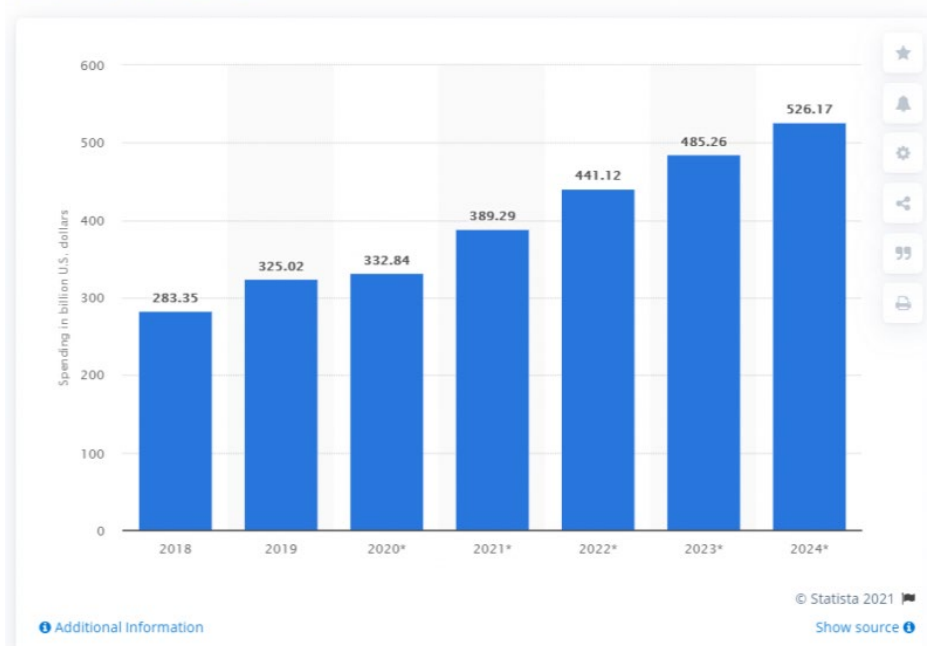
### Worldwide spending on digital advertising will reach \$526.17 Bn by 2024

Around 4 million new websites appear online every month in Google search engine platform (Alqahtani and Alqahtani, 2022), meaning that it is becoming increasingly difficult for companies to remain visible from competitor sites without using the optimal tools.

With 2022 thought to be a year of recovery for various companies it's potentially hard to be optimistic about brand ad spending habits in the wake of a worldwide disruption such as war and increasing cases of new variants of Covid.

The graph below shows us the YoY amount of money going into digital advertising in US dollars. 2020 had a small increase from 2019, but by 2024 it is expected that worldwide spending on digital advertising will reach \$526.17 Bn; with mobile advertising accounting for over \$440 Bn in 2022, desktop browsing will take a back seat.

**Digital advertising spending worldwide from 2018 to 2024**  
(in billion U.S. dollars)



## Spending habits in the midst of change

Since 2020, spending habits have changed dramatically. Mobile advertising spending in 2021 stood at over \$275 million, and is expected to reach nearly \$310 million by the end of 2022.

Mobile commerce is expected to have the most increase in sales growth, with a predicted rise of a record-breaking 68% in 2022. Since users want to be able to shop from anywhere and anytime, m-commerce has a widespread user base. In 2020, grocery shopping apps have seen a growth of \$24 billion in 2020 and are predicted to surpass \$38 billion in 2023.

Of course, we can't forget the quick growth of video advertising. Media agency, Zenith, reported that the average person spent c.100 minutes watching online videos daily in 2021, reflecting a growth of 19% since 2019.

89% of marketers have stated that video has given them a good ROI, and 80% of the respondents from the same study by Wyzowl said that video has directly helped increase sales. With 92% continuing to value video as an 'important part' of their marketing strategy.



## Marketing & Ad spend analysis

Average monthly searches for “content marketing agency” fell from 5,400 to 1,900 but a trend of niche searches tells us that there is potentially a need for marketing resources that are targeted, meaning that greater investment in content around these industries may be needed.

Choosing the right budget for Ad Spend is imperative now more than ever, but with businesses seeking the right avenues to reach their target markets on a plethora of new technologies that we haven't seen before, it's imperative that organisations diversify their offering with a very well thought out multichannel approach.

Staying on top of advanced ad spend tracking is also an essential step for 2022, especially when it comes to multichannel marketing. Spend should focus on higher-funnel efforts that track and measure true impact and ROI.

# Budgeting after the Pandemic

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The downturn in global 2020 ad spends meant that marketers had to rethink entire strategies and forecasts, and while things appear to be getting better, we think it's important to look forward to the new financial year as a beacon of hope.

Many have made the assumption that marketing budgets in a post-COVID environment will remain entirely different from forecasts set in 2019. With consumers looking for a new type of experience, marketers need to come up with new ways to engage the public while also trying to combat digital fatigue.

## The effect of the pandemic on industry

Some industries have been more affected by the Pandemic than others, which is important to consider when looking at the figures and statistics.

During this time, it was evident that in order to keep business afloat then the consumer experience would have to be a digital one. The CMO survey asked what type of customer behaviours respondents observed during COVID-19, and the most notable figure was that 97% noticed a decrease of in-person marketing engagement.

Perhaps surprising (at least on the surface) is that marketing budgets from 2020 to now have risen.

*"In February 2020, respondents' firms planned to spend 11.3% of their total budgets on marketing, on average. By June 2020, this rose to 12.6%."*

*(source: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/>)*

Businesses who have survived the past two years have come out the other side, toughened up and ready for new challenges that may come about. Being able to diversify their offerings in such a tough climate has made them stronger than ever, but with the new financial year on our doorstep, what's the situation in Q1 2022 looking like going into Q2?

## The economical situation within the context of marketing

The economy took a drastic hit during the pandemic, and the current rate of inflation reflects the need to boost the economy. The Bank of England stated in January 2022, "the rate of inflation went up quickly in 2021. We expect it to reach over 7% by spring 2022 and then start to come down after that."

Financial analyst, Danni Hewson, anticipates a drop in retail spend over the next quarter meaning that price is high-up on the marketing agenda. A tricky situation is that marketers will need to prepare to justify higher prices to customers, and work to ensure that the price remains one that customers are willing to pay.

The structural change in the economy is geared more towards ecommerce which has grown in popularity because of the convenience, value, and choice it offers consumers. Which means that there is a greater emphasis on the role advertising plays to drive sales growth.

However, the increase of shopping habits through ecommerce has meant a rise in the power of consumers. They have access to a near unlimited amount of products/services while having the information at their fingertips of price points and comparison. This accessibility has led consumers to be more engaged and connected - so it is important now more than ever to spearhead investment into the customer experience.



## Budgeting after the pandemic analysis

A significant trend across marketing is the move to in-house resourcing prompted by pressure on budgets. 29% of work previously carried out by agencies has moved in-house in just the last 12-months alone. With this in mind, organisations should explore what success looks like beyond profit - and retention of staff is certainly an important consideration.

With importance placed on companies redefining why they exist beyond profit, budgeting post-pandemic isn't just about the bottom line. With more priorities comes an increase in complexities. Businesses should rethink key deliverables such as brand messaging and employee/ community engagement.

The recruitment of talent means that your business has identified a substantial growth opportunity.

A study looked at by the Harvard Business Review found that when "higher ups" in a company make it a priority to balance the concerns of customers, employees, and the community, employees are more likely to perceive them as visionary.

This positive perception of those higher up in the business makes employees more willing to make the extra effort and in-turn corporate results improve.

In a post-pandemic world, employee satisfaction and wellbeing are at the top of the list for many organisations. The International Labour Organisation's research states that "well-being is a key factor in determining an organisation's long-term effectiveness."

## Technologies

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Within 2022's recovery is the emergence of new and updated technologies, with emphasis placed on authentic content, offering chatbot services, optimising for voice search, making the most of social media marketing, and creating an engaging user experience.

As we near the end of the first quarter, it'll be interesting to see if any of the predicted trends from 2021 will come to fruition.

Ryan Gould, Vice President of Strategy and Marketing Services at Elevation Marketing, said that *"while we're moving faster and faster toward a tech-dominant world, small and midsize businesses need to prioritise the technology trends that they can leverage for greater business growth"*

He also discussed what questions businesses need to be asking to decide what technologies are right for them:

1. Who is my audience?
2. What and where are my business gaps?
3. Will this technology help close my business gaps?
4. Do I have the resources to sustain this technology for the long run?
5. Which leads us to our top 5 technologies to keep an eye on in 2022.

## Voice search

Google has been encouraging users to use voice search since 2016, and then had a big push in 2018. Is this method of browsing the future trying to be en vogue again (if it ever was)?

In November 2021 Google's Martin Splitt's view was that voice search is not the future and that there will be no need for an SEO strategy for it.

However, many agencies have still talked a lot about voice search within their trend predictions for 2022, it would be foolish not to investigate. The apparent resurgence of voice search (although it never really went anywhere), could be due to the exponential advancements in pretty much every industry - with significant emphasis in healthcare and banking.

Although bringing up the pandemic again may seem repetitive, travel restrictions, both national and international, meant that people were looking for more to do on their doorstep. Consumers are using more voice technology to search for local restaurants, establishments, or locations.

Voice search is a way for device users to use their voice to enter a command to search rather than manually typing in what they're looking for - making the browser a more accessible place. Accessibility is an important factor in a post-pandemic world, with communities coming together in the physical world it stands to reason that the online realm should increase accessibility for users.

An accessible website creates a great user experience for those who are differently abled, and enables everyone, regardless of differences, to become involved and contribute to the digital world. It goes hand in hand with mobile optimisation and usability - which will ultimately provide a positive effect to a company's SEO efforts. W3C reported that accessible websites have better search results, reduced maintenance costs, and increased audience reach.

## NFTs

The Word of the Year in 2021 from Collins Dictionary was NFT (non-fungible tokens). Crypto economies have been using these non-fungible tokens since 2017, back when CryptoPunks launched their unique digital art marketplace — the first of its kind.

But what is an NFT, and what does it mean for the digital marketing world? They are unique and non-interchangeable chunks of data stored on a digital ledger... At the simplest level of explanation an NFT can't be replaced with something else - unlike BitCoin.

Mitchell Clarke from The Verge wrote:

*NFTs can really be anything digital (such as drawings, music, your brain downloaded and turned into an AI), but a lot of the current excitement is around using the tech to sell digital art.*

NFTs are becoming increasingly controversial, for one there is disparity between “traditional” art collectors and the potential for NFTs to change the landscape of art collection.

They are expected to expand into a broad set of industries this year, and although they are considered to be in their infancy (for the most part) the potential to become mainstream could be very real. Marketers will be more able to create tokens that are tailored to specific audiences to target specific messages for specific groups.

On the other side of the coin of NFTs is the huge carbon footprint that is generated to create one. A single transaction on the Ethereum blockchain uses as much power as the conventional household over a day and a half. So in the wake of environment enlightenment at COP26, NFTs need to evolve rapidly with the times.

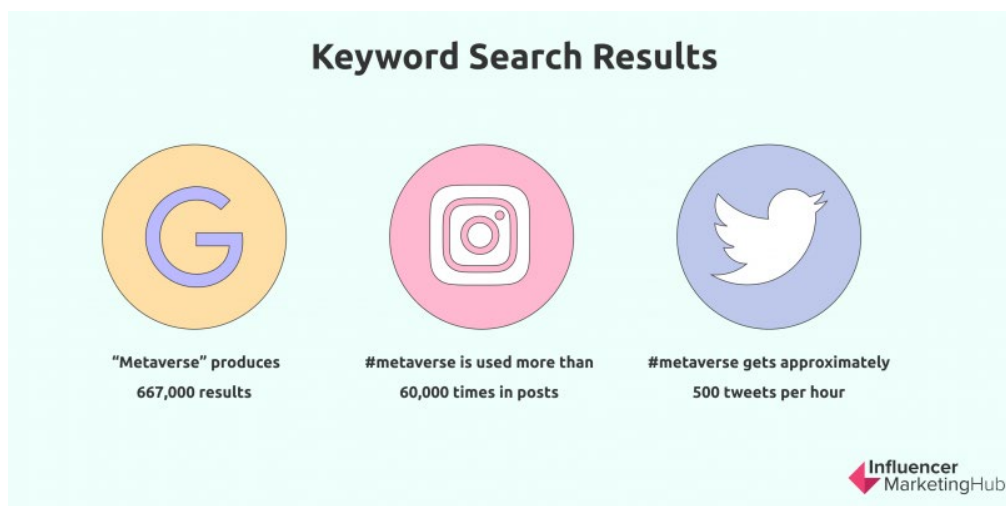
NFTs could interrupt the way digital media is distributed and monetised, with the focus on creators, and the source of assets, there is a new model of media ownership. This allows creators to directly profit from them, without the middleman between content creators and consumers.

At the moment, SMEs needn't worry themselves about the intricacies of NFTs, especially in the early stages of the “new” opportunity. Organisations must understand that the implications of legal and reputational issues are still in infancy.

## Metaverse

A unique and immersive virtual environment, the Metaverse could soon be taking over the internet (but don't bet on it). What was once only imaginable in films like The Matrix, VR and AR are very real, just perhaps not in the way sci-fi has portrayed.

Virtual reality has been around for a long time, but it was the 1990s that saw the first widespread commercial releases of consumer headsets.



The key characteristics of metaverses include:

- Existing in real time by synchronising with timing in the real world
- A functioning universe that allows its users to create, own, sell and invest
- Different platforms can work together in the metaverse

We agree that digital marketers need to keep up with the latest technological advancements but does this include a working understanding of the metaverse?

There are implications to be discussed of what the Metaverse means to businesses. Such as:

1. A new way for businesses to reach audiences across the globe.
2. Businesses can interact with their customers in a more personal way.
3. The virtual worlds can be used to train employees.

There have been debates into the current relevance of the metaverse within digital marketing, with common arguments being that it could just be a fleeting trend. It comes down to investigating and expanding knowledge around the metaverse and who will likely be using it in the future (here's looking at you Gen Z). With the metaverse comes high unpredictability, the lack of standardisation, and the risk of being inauthentic. All we can say for sure is "watch this space!"

## Cookies

Third-party cookies are tracking codes that are placed on a web visitor's computer after being generated by another website other than your own.

Delayed plans to phase out third-party cookies on Google Chrome has meant that its previous implementation date of 2022 has been pushed to 2023. Other browsers such as Safari and Firefox had already implemented some default blocking against third-party cookies from 2013, which means that you should really be thinking about your brand with a cookie-less future. Although the change won't happen overnight, the phasing out of the cookies is expected to only take 3 months.

Planning is a key step to creating a sustainable and privacy-focused competitive advantage, this is where a consent management platform is needed to comply with regulations.

GetApp, an online resource for businesses exploring software as a service (SaaS) products, researched the marketing impact potential and found that 41% of marketers believe their biggest challenge will be their inability to track the right data.

The immediate impact of marketing life without third-party cookies will mean improving a company's current options. A redefining of the way we use data is upon us, and a streamlined funnel is what's needed to keep converting customers.

The current regulatory regime is due to be subject to significant changes from the UK. There is a promise to free up personal data transfers to new countries - which includes the US, and to relax privacy requirements to make space for a more innovative and data-driven agenda.

## GA4

In 'A Long Farewell to Google's Universal Analytics' written by John Warner (Click's Digital Marketing Manager), it talks about the upcoming migration from Google's Universal Analytics to Google Analytics 4 (GA4).

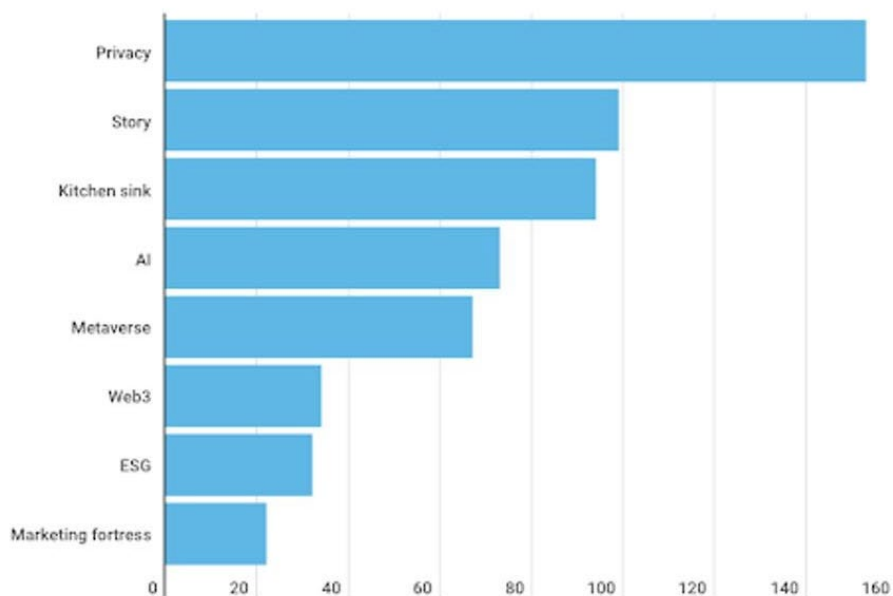
Hundreds of millions of websites are expected to make the move by July 2023. The future of the web is on the horizon and GA4 has been brought about from Universal Analytics' own suitability (or lack thereof) for the future.

If you're thinking that the loss of third-party cookies and the implementation of GA4 are linked, you'd be spot on. But the loss of cookies isn't the only dramatic change from Google, and there's a lot to be excited about, that we don't have time to list here. It's certainly in a business's interest to get GA4 properly set up and running so you can capture user data and wrap your head around the true flexibility of open-parametered event tracking.

## Technology Analysis

Privacy is the number one most important technology for marketing in 2022, and preparing for a cookieless future is near the top (if not at the top) of the list of priorities a marketer and a business should have.

### CMOs on most important technology, topic, or space



The evolution of different technologies has meant a scramble for the next "big thing", in a bid for a company to become more relevant. The fear of becoming outdated is perhaps not wholly irrational due to the fact that Gen Z'ers are reaching stages of maturity and are keen to be a part of the bigger picture of new tech.

## Conclusion

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From analysing 2022's first quarter it's clear to see the shift in a digital (or even traditional) marketer's priorities since the pandemic. Marketing strategies that are more conversational, empathetic and understanding of consumers have been put to the forefront of KPIs and engagement targets.

With the economy being in an uncertain state meant that there were uncertainties in a variety of industries; including marketing. GDP growth is due to slow in the first half of this year due to factors such as the cost of living increase and ongoing supply chain issues.

Buzzwords like Metaverse and NFTs are creating - perhaps unnecessarily - hype within many of at least the larger organisations. GA4's deadline is looming and due to be fully implemented by July 2023, it may seem a little optimistic but the change will affect businesses worldwide.

The next three quarters are set to maintain and develop growth and recovery from the tumultuous previous two years. Looking towards the horizon it seems like a positive future is upon us.



## Our accreditations



## Our awards



## About Click Consult

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year and Digital Agency of the Year 2018, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.