

Creators and AI shape the conversation—and the awards—at Cannes Lions 2024

Article

Every year, as adland descends on the south of France for Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, there are a few topics that dominate the conversation. This year's two hottest

topics—creators and AI—[didn't deviate much](#) from 2023, but the way each showed up on the Croisette and at the Palais did.

Conversations about AI were centered on risk and results. Last year's unbridled excitement about generative AI's potential for creativity gave way to more serious conversations in 2024 about responsible use and ROI. It makes sense: [Current applications of generative AI in media and advertising](#) are a far cry from some of the lofty expectations heard last year, and ethical considerations around both AI-generated content and AI data practices remain in the spotlight.

- **Generative AI mostly isn't developing creative assets for public distribution.** According to Cannes Lions, 12% of Lions entries in 2024 used AI. Without clarification on how the entrants used AI in the creative process or a 2023 comparison, it's hard to put this figure into context. But it does provide more evidence that there is still a long way to go for advertisers to get to where they thought they could be with generative AI just last year.
- **Efficiencies were still the top generative AI use cases cited by the C-suite.** “For now, time savings is the biggest opportunity,” said Kate Kenner Archibald, CMO of Dash Hudson. “The expectation with using genAI should be at least another quarter of a person on your team or at least a day saved.” Meta's Alvin Bowles, VP, global business group, echoed the sentiment, saying that the company's goal was to provide AI tools to agencies and brands so that they “could get time back” and “focus on the creative brief.”
- **Looking at AI more broadly, personalization was key.** “Right now when we think about how we can leverage AI, we can actually use it to better understand our consumers,” said Josh Campo, CEO of Razorfish. “We can take silos of data that were not connected before, feed them into a model, and get much sharper on how we think about a brief to a campaign strategy to perhaps an untapped market.”
- **Nearly every conversation about AI included the word “responsible.”** At TikTok, President Blake Chan dlee stressed the importance of labeling to ensure that users know when AI has been used to create content on the platform, including on the [AI avatars](#) that TikTok launched at Cannes. Even so, most conversations paid little more than lip service to the term “responsible AI,” though that may be partly due to the fact that frameworks are constantly evolving and developing.

The power of the creator economy was on full display. Marketers couldn't take more than a few steps along the Croisette—which felt younger and edgier than ever—without bumping

into a creator or creator delegate. While creators have unofficially been part of the festival for years, this year marked the first time Cannes Lions hosted a dedicated creator program, [marking a pivotal](#)—and somewhat humbling—moment for the media and ad industry.

- **The number of entries for Social and Influencer Lions rose 21% YoY.** That's partially due to the fact that Cannes Lions opened up the category to creator content for the first time this year. And the growth in entries is clear evidence that influencer marketing is more than just a line item on brand budgets. We expect US marketers to spend \$8.14 billion on **influencer marketing** on **social media** alone this year.
- **Creators are still in very different stages of development and maturity.** The discrepancies between big-name and up-and-coming creators were readily apparent. Some creators in attendance, like Tinx or MrBallen, have thriving businesses that now compete for consumer attention and spending with traditional brands and media companies, while other creators were still in the early stages of figuring out how to score brand deals, which are the primary way in which creators make money.
- **Brands and industries that have been slower to work with creators brought them along.** The creator economy's role in B2B marketing was a hot topic at LinkedIn. EMARKETER joined a panel to discuss its future with Neil Waller, CEO of Whalar and Rahul Titus, global head of influence at Ogilvy, which won the B2B Grand Prix for a campaign that incorporated creator content. Over at **Amazon**, influencer Alix Earle and co-founder of skincare brand Summer Fridays Marianna Hewitt talked sponsored content on a panel called "Now Trending: #Authenticity."
- **Hesitant advertisers no longer have a choice but to accept creators.** Big brands that have historically been reluctant to spend on creators are now leaning in. At least some of that budget is coming from traditional channels, such as TV, which is being redirected both to sponsored content as well as ads on creator videos. In fact, in 2025, we expect social video ad spending in the US to surpass **linear TV** ad spending, indicating that advertisers are catching up to consumers in terms of where they are spending their time.

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