



EXPECT THE

UNEXPECTED

Predictions 2024

Many predictions for the year ahead can be a bit ... predictable.

The same sources, the same agenda, the same conclusions, the same sales pitches.

So we wanted to try to look beyond the obvious.

Not just the big trends you'll see elsewhere, but the nuance of how – we think – they'll *really* play out, what's fuelling them, and what actions you can take as a result.

Based on a year of paying attention to what's happening around us and asking why.

Five pithy predictions for what we believe will shape society, communications and the media in 2024 and beyond.

1

**Climate crisis
leads to climate
fatalism**

2

**AI
everywhere**

3

**Factional
facts**

4

**Collabs with
a reason**

5

**Black, white and
dead all over?**

6

**Expect the
unexpected**

CLIMATE CRISIS LEADS TO CLIMATE

FATALISM.



YOU'LL SEE

“COP 28 is a landmark moment. We’ve agreed to phase out fossil fuels – but can we do it fast enough?”

WE SAY

The crisis is going nowhere. We’re going to fear our summers. We’ll prepare for them like hurricane season. With climate breakdown unavoidable, we’ll focus on mitigation – some of which, like the surge in demand for aircon, will exacerbate the problem. So the debate will be around how much we’re willing to spend on disaster prevention rather than disaster recovery, and the ‘fair’ way to net zero.

HERE'S WHY

Since at least Poznan 2008, COP summits have been billed as last chance. But you can’t have 14 last chances – however true that may be – without urgency and trust. Psychologically, socially and politically, humans are bad at choosing to suffer or spend money today for a better tomorrow. Climate fatalism – nothing can be done; we just need to deal with it – will take hold.

WHAT YOU CAN USE

It’s not enough to say that something must be done; we need to talk about what that should be, when it needs to happen – and then do it. Comms leaders need to lead and say what some may think unsayable: Growth at all costs is self-defeating; not spending now, will cost much more later.

AI EVERYWHERE. EVERYTHING ELSE, NOT SO MUCH.

YOU'LL SEE

"AI is going to be everywhere, it's going to change everything ... And might be the end of the world."

WE SAY

Generative AI and General AI will continue to capture the *conversation*, but the real revolution will be quieter, duller, and (even) more useful, like more regulation or like getting your shopping delivered more efficiently. We'll also see the unintended consequences of AI, with AI-curated content possibly making the internet less useful. There'll be principled backlash and rejection from consumers and creators alike.

HERE'S WHY

The AI hype has substance because AI is useful in a way recent years' hyped technologies just haven't been to date. Generative AI asks big, unresolvable, conversation-driving questions, plus the tech world thrives on hype.

But artificial intelligence really isn't *intelligent*. And the automation and mass-production of everything from code to meeting notes immediately lowers the value of that output. The question is whether it truly increases efficiency or just increases volume – and does it increase the value of human input?

WHAT YOU CAN USE

Stay abreast of what's happening but don't feel a need to rush in. Respect the human and ask what's truly valuable.

FACTIONAL

FACTS.

YOU'LL SEE

“Elections, social media and AI: misinformation and outright disinformation will be rife.”

WE SAY

Fact checking services will flourish. But the fastest fact will win the battle for clicks. Media organisations will need to upweight their fact checking resources to keep ahead of independent sources - expect an explosion in OSINT (open-source intelligence) techniques - or else double down on authoritative, post hoc analysis.

HERE'S WHY

Online news is still an eyeballs game that rewards being first. Link-free short form videos make it easy for 'facts' and narratives to be established, while making it difficult to check sources. A savvy audience is sceptical to partisan claims ([and most people assume both journalists and social media generally are biased](#)), so being positioned as an 'impartial' fact checker is going to stand out. But traditional newsrooms' skill sets - and lawyers - are lagging behind. And it's not merely a question of media trust but a [dislike of points of view we disagree with](#) - and therefore facts that support our views.

WHAT YOU CAN USE

If you have a platform and resource and spot a falsehood, assume you have a duty to correct.

COLLABS

WITH A REASON.

YOU'LL SEE

“Brands’ need to connect with culture to stay relevant means legacy brands will continue to collaborate with youthful upstarts.”

WE SAY

Straight-up collaborations have become commonplace, so brands will have to look at how they embed meaning into partnerships to ensure they tell a compelling story. In a time of great inequality, luxury brands co-opting working class culture will be criticised. Drop culture’s similarities to unsustainable fast fashion [can’t be ignored forever](#).

Collabs will get increasingly meta and play with the very idea of collabs, or else be white label collabs – no second name, just the brand creating something novel. We wager that someone will do a collab with [Rowan’s](#) bowling alley.

HERE'S WHY

In 2024 it’ll be seven years since Louis Vuitton x Supreme. The tide is turning on that template of two incongruous brands collaborating, just because it’s “cool”. [Social fluency still creates social currency](#) – the kudos of recognising both luxe and non-luxe brands, showing you’re part of the in-group. But as middle-of-the-road brands get on board and culture moves on, new forms of collaboration are needed. And there are some questions of ethics and palatability to be asked about aspects of collabs.

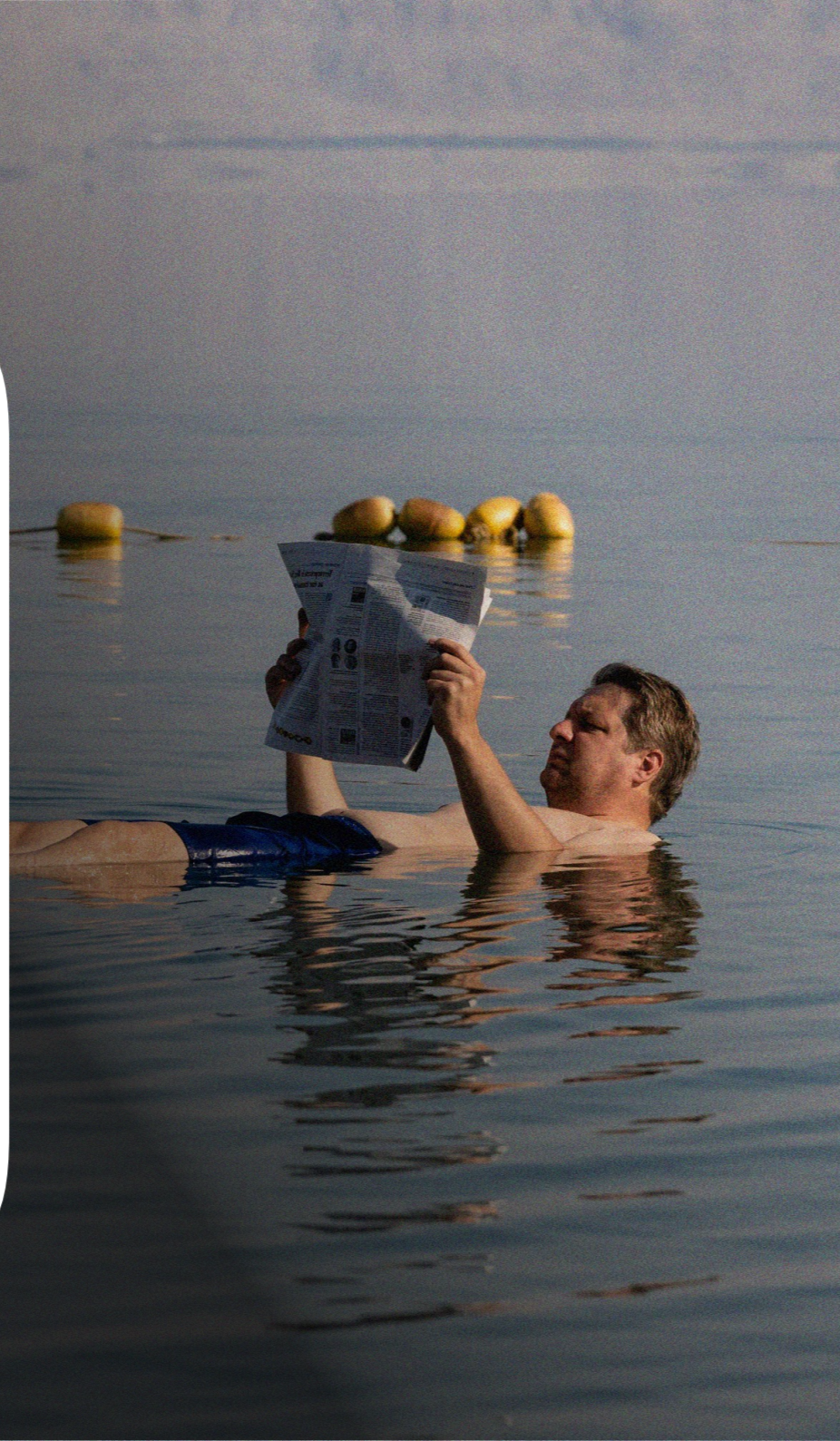
WHAT YOU CAN USE

Make it make sense or make it deliberately make no sense. Collaborate to create something with a genuine purpose or embrace the idea of the wearable meme to its fullest.

BLACK, WHITE AND

DEAD

ALL OVER.



ZENO

YOU'LL SEE

“Just when you think the situation for newspapers can’t get any more dire ... it does. Collapsing circulation, job cuts, consolidation.”

WE SAY

News brands will evolve into a mixture of lifestyle brand and think tank. The value of direct readership will be usurped by a sense of broader cultural influence. Pay walls, subscription models, podcasts and print-only models will continue to become more common, with knock on effects for search, as low-quality or AI-driven content fills the information gap. The winner-takes-almost-all nature of online, means fewer titles becoming more authoritative online.

HERE'S WHY

The financial hole facing news brands ever since the social media revolution has not and cannot be filled. There’s still clearly a role for news brands – directly and, increasingly indirectly, they reach almost everyone – only no one’s worked out how to make that pay. And making it pay seems more difficult than ever. Hence owners for whom ownership is less about making a return and more about wielding influence.

WHAT YOU CAN USE

Editorial isn’t dead, but consider its value in the media mix – not just reach, but agenda-setting, influential, (less mis)trusted. Direct audiences may be getting smaller, but targeting a more specific audience, united by values, instead of a broad blast, is often effective.

EXPECT THE

UNEXPECTED.

YOU'LL SEE

Confident predictions for the year ahead, trying to sell you something.

WE SAY

It is certain that something will happen to shape the year that seems not merely unlikely but actually impossible.

HERE'S WHY

War in Gaza. War in Ukraine. Exploding cost of living. Oil spikes. Recession. A pandemic. The world is too messy, complex, emotional and interdependent to make neat predictions for 12 days ahead, let alone 12 months.

WHAT YOU CAN USE

Whatever you plan, be prepared to react with agility and humanity.

ZENO