

Consumers want businesses to drive sustainability

The Shein effect vs. Vinted's growth

The rise of fast fashion retailers like Shein illustrates the disconnect between consumers wanting to be 'good' vs. the desire for affordability and speed, which is particularly prominent among Gen Z. However, this is tempered somewhat by the growth of the second-hand market via apps like Vinted and Depop - driven by increased awareness of sustainability, items' affordability and how easy it is to resell or buy items. 82% of consumers feel a positive emotion when buying second hand according to ThredUp's [2022 'Resale Report'](#), while it's [2024 update](#) reveals that 74% of retail executives who don't currently offer resale are either considering or planning on getting into resale in the future.

The trust factor

Businesses meeting consumers' expectations isn't just about sustainability – it's also about upholding transparency and improving trust. Consumers' concerns around privacy sharing and data usage are slowly decreasing, and [research released by Credos](#) in January 2025 shows that people's trust in advertising generally is improving, driven by young people – with over half of 18-34 year olds trusting online ads.

However, older generations still retain concerns around how their data is being used and, with 60% of people willing to share their data if they feel they can trust the organisation [according to the Data Protection Network](#), it's vital that trust is earned. With AI set to reshape data collection and processing by 2030, balancing technological advancement with privacy protection will require collaboration between governments, companies and individuals to maintain and improve trust in the long-term.

As we head towards 2030, it will be increasingly important for all businesses - including advertisers and media owners - to embody, uphold and champion consumers' value and expectations, particularly when it comes to sustainability. At present, there is a gap between consumer attitudes and actions on sustainability. While people consider the environment when purchasing, their focus has waned since 2021, partly due to the cost-of-living crisis. Research shows that consumers expect businesses to 'be good', lead by example and drive environmental change through proactivity and transparency. Overall, industry leaders see sustainability in media as vital, with advertising playing a key role in driving positive change.

How to future-proof for 2030

- 1 Integrate sustainable thinking now. Agencies and advertisers need to integrate sustainable thinking into planning and trading now, to ensure it is an 'everyday consideration' by 2030. Work with partners who have expertise in this area and can advise on what's needed. Media owners should develop and elevate sustainable media solutions to help advertisers adapt
- 2 Consider the AI factor. Media and marketing's increasing use of AI is at odds with the need for greater sustainability. All businesses across the industry need to actively consider how to ensure AI and data is used efficiently and to greatest effect in order to minimise this carbon impact
- 3 Transparency and trust are paramount. Brands should openly communicate why they collect data and how it will be used to benefit the consumer. Capitalise on personalisation, but do so with purpose - leveraging data to segment an audience meaningfully and tailoring messages that feel personal but not invasive
- 4 Show that self-regulation works. The industry needs to embrace self-regulation and show that it works. This is the only way to avoid new regulation being imposed that could lead to increased restrictions for advertising in certain categories and media



We have to find our way to a middle ground where we sell responsibly. The problem is bigger than advertising and agencies but we can help, so we should be agents of change.

Laurence Green, Director of Effectiveness, IPA