



Brown hair

If recession were a hair colour, it would be mousey brown. Hairdressers report that the flaxen-haired masses are doing their bit for the economy by turning a darker, lower-maintenance shade of pale.



Smurfs

Everyone's favourite 50 year old blue dwarves are set to make a comeback on the big screen this year.

It Shoes

Rising from the ashes of the It Bag is the It Shoe, according to none other than Miuccia Prada: "The obsession with handbags has finished... It feels over. It's about shoes now." It's a shoe-in.



Baby name shame

10% of parents wish they could change their children's names. Let's hope for Apple and Moses' sakes that Chris and Gwynnie are among them.

McDonald's

Arne Jacobsen-inspired seating, subdued lighting, free Wi-Fi, recycled cooking oil, A-level qualifications for staff. Could everyone's favourite scapegoat be about to stage the biggest comeback of the year?



Dining rooms

Set to be a thing of the past by 2020 as sledgehammer-wielding, Sarah Beeny wannabes merrily knock down walls to create larger, open-plan living spaces.



Reading

As a new survey claims that a quarter of British adults haven't read a book in over a year and Lily Allen is appointed to the Costa Prize judging panel.

PDEs (Public Displays of Emotion)

Note to Hillary Clinton: *Presidents Don't Emote.*

Gordon Eldrett, Account Manager, prepares to tighten his purse-strings in the year ahead



Barely a day has gone by, lately, without the global credit crisis being splashed across the front pages. In the US, the dollar is so lame it needs crutches to hobble across the Dow Jones while in the UK, even an 8 year old with only a piggy bank full of coppers to their name knows that the local Northern Rock is best avoided.

Research by Ernst & Young shows that profit warnings from British firms are at a six-year high. Not since the dot-com bubble burst so spectacularly in 2001 have so many been crying that they have so little.



This obviously rings warning bells for those of us in the world of marketing who are all too keenly aware that when the profits start to dip the advertising budget is usually the first to feel the pinch. And so it proved in Q4 last year with the Bellwether Report showing budgets being revised downwards more steeply than at any time in the last 2 years.

Chris Williamson, who wrote the report, is not optimistic for 2008 although he doesn't necessarily feel that the Q4 figures represent a watershed. "The first-quarter survey will be very indicative of how the year's going to pan out," he says, but with predictions that the age of easy credit is over there is, it feels, almost an inevitability about a tightening of the belts and the purse strings.

2008 is not all doom and gloom, argues Elaine Patterson, Account Manager



The general forecast for the year ahead has been uncharacteristically mixed among crystal ball-gazing media moguls. What is certain, however, is that the challenge for all advertisers will be to maintain momentum in increasingly uncertain economic circumstances. Encouragingly, this year has gotten off to a stronger start than expected.

Thinkbox – the television marketing body for the main UK commercial broadcasters - has just released figures lauding the fact that people are now watching more TV ads than ever before with BARB data suggesting that, despite the growth of digital video recorders and ad-skipping technology, viewers are still watching an average of 40 TV ads per day. Although positive, this challenges advertisers to create stand-out for their brand by engaging with consumers in a different way – highlighted by ITV's first foray into ad-funded programming with Pedigree. The observational documentary, to be aired in a Sunday evening slot, is set in The Dog Trust in Harefield and Manchester Dog's Home. Additional content, including video, will also be available at itv.com. Samantha Wilson, client development director at ITV, said: "Dog Rescue is a great example of how to develop content with brands. Not only does the series meet the high standards of ITV's commissioners and has earned a great slot in the schedule but it also does a fantastic job for Pedigree." ITV has said it is in active discussions with more than 30 brand owners, including telecoms, technology, automotive and utilities, to develop more ad-funded programming. Potential reforms to CRR (Contracts Rights Renewal), and OFCOM's ruling that BSkyB is to reduce its share in ITV also promise to further shake up the current TV marketplace's commercial model.

Similar approaches continue to develop across radio and press platforms, where media brands are also learning the value of truly integrating commercial and content propositions and developing truly successful cross-platform opportunities. The commercialisation of the now established podcast is a great example of this working – with consumers reportedly preferring branding around this content provision to any other model.

With most major media brands now in possession of increasingly successful digital opportunities the powerful growth of online is set to continue. Consumer engagement will continue to drive innovation in both advertising and content. Experian has even forecasted the rise of 'super advocates' as a result of the ever increasing influence of social networking sites. These out-spoken individuals could have the power to make or break a brand's reputation in 2008.

So with marketing belts likely to be tightening and an increasingly advertising-savvy consumer to reach, 2008 is set to be a challenging but exciting year for media creativity and innovation.

Five ways to spend your time or money this month:

- **The Bob Bag.** Designed for Mulberry by none other than potty-mouthed soap-dodger Sir Bob Geldof, that well-known doyenne of bag fashion. Price on request from Mulberry (read: if you have to ask, you can't afford it).
- **Scrubya.** Lather liberally with a soap whose proceeds go towards 'cleaning up' after Dubya. Available to buy at www.scrubya.com.
- Achieve the feline gaze you've always dreamed of with **Hello Kitty contact lenses.** Even your irises aren't safe from the (now frankly menacing) Japanese über-brand. Available on eBay.
- **Gloves for Lovers.** With Valentine's Day fast approaching, give everyone around you the boak with these three-legged mittens – one for him, one for her and one to share. £19.50 from www.pedlars.co.uk
- **Weight loss lip gloss.** 'Always on the lips. Never on the hips.' Fuze Slenderize gloss promises to speed up metabolism, curb appetite and boost energy levels. £9.50 from Too Faced.

