# Marketers face tension between generative AI use and achieving net-zero by 2030



The rapid evolution of marketing technology, particularly generative AI, has ignited a conversation about sustainability within the industry. While marketers overwhelmingly advocate for net-zero emissions and expect accountability from partners, a troubling disconnect has emerged: many are increasingly reliant on energy-intensive AI tools that risk undermining their climate commitments.

Recent insights from climate technology firm 51toCarbonZero reveal that a staggering 90% of marketers believe the advertising sector can achieve net-zero emissions by 2030. Yet paradoxically, 42% admit that their own use of generative AI poses a significant barrier to this ambition. This contradiction highlights a pervasive blind spot in marketing strategies, where the enthusiasm for innovative digital tools clashes with the industry's responsiblity to address environmental impact.

Generative AI, particularly in its more elaborate forms like large language models (LLMs), is notorious for its high energy consumption. Richard Davis, CEO of 51toCarbonZero, underscores the urgent need for marketers to adopt smaller language models (SLMs). These alternatives are not only more energy-efficient but also cost-effective for many marketing applications. Davis points out that while GenAI can drive significant creative possibilities, marketers must leverage these technologies responsibly and strategically to align with sustainability goals.

Despite the complexities of incorporating sustainability into marketing, the financial implications are becoming more pressing. Digital marketing emissions have soared, paralleling the aviation sector's carbon footprint, due in large part to the rise of 24/7 operations and programmatic media buying. As brands increasingly recognise that their marketing practices have substantial environmental implications, there is a growing expectation that sustainability metrics will be integrated into overall corporate climate strategies.

Procurement departments are also beginning to shift the paradigm by insisting on sustainability disclosures from agencies and vendors. The narrative surrounding budget constraints is evolving; sustainability is now viewed as a vital aspect of business, rather than an optional extra. Davis notes that over two-thirds of senior marketers regard sustainability as a key consideration when selecting partners, indicating a cultural shift in the industry. This evolution is especially crucial as regulatory pressures intensify, particularly within the EU and UK, driving accountability across the marketing landscape.

Yet, amidst this growing awareness are stark contrasts in approach. Some brands are leading the charge, actively investing in carbon intelligence platforms and exploring innovative AI solutions that support sustainability. In contrast, others remain mired in inertia, missing opportunities to integrate sustainable practices within their operations and strategy. This divergence could have significant repercussions; as Davis asserts, “Decarbonization isn’t just the right thing to do. It’s smart business.” As investors, regulators, and consumers heighten their scrutiny on corporate environmental commitments, the pressure on lagging brands will only mount.

Ultimately, marketing sits at a unique crossroads where its influence and reputation can catalyse broader organisational change. If the industry can effectively address its environmental footprints and lead by example, it could pave the way for a more sustainable future across sectors. This requires not just technological innovation but a fundamental rethinking of how marketing integrates into the wider corporate commitment to climate action.

For those leading this transformation, the path is clear: to succeed in the evolving business landscape, sustainability must be at the heart of marketing strategies, ensuring that the promises made resonate not just in words, but in actions that positively impact the planet.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraph 4
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5. Paragraph 6
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/19/marketers-want-go-green-genai-locking-them-carbon-trap> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/383719aa-df38-4ae3-ab0e-6279a897915e> - This article discusses Google's greenhouse gas emissions, which have increased by 48% over the past five years, reaching 14.3 million tonnes of carbon equivalent in 2023. The rise is attributed to the expansion of data centers supporting artificial intelligence systems, casting uncertainty on the company's goal to achieve 'net zero' emissions by 2030. The article highlights the challenges of reducing emissions while developing AI infrastructure and the complexities of predicting AI's future environmental impact.
3. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/11/3-ways-ai-can-revolutionize-sustainable-aviation/> - This article explores how artificial intelligence, particularly generative AI, can contribute to the sustainability of the aviation industry, which accounts for 2% of global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions. It discusses AI-driven innovations that can enhance fuel efficiency and reduce aviation's ecological footprint, emphasizing the need for rapid action to achieve net-zero targets.
4. <https://www.mmm-online.com/home/channel/advertisers-grapple-with-the-weight-of-ais-environmental-impact/> - This article examines the environmental impact of artificial intelligence in the marketing and advertising industry. It highlights the substantial energy consumption of data centers and GPU chips used in AI, noting that training complex AI models requires significant computational power, leading to increased greenhouse gas emissions and water usage due to cooling systems.
5. <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/value-in-motion/ai-energy-consumption-net-zero.html> - This article discusses the energy efficiency of AI and its potential to reduce energy consumption across various sectors. It highlights that AI applications can help companies improve energy efficiency, leading to projected energy savings outside data centers. The article also emphasizes the importance of tracking AI-related emissions and choosing AI vendors with sustainable practices.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_impact_of_artificial_intelligence> - This Wikipedia article provides an overview of the environmental impact of artificial intelligence, focusing on its carbon footprint due to growing energy usage, especially during training and usage. It discusses the significant energy consumption of large language models and the exponential increase in computational requirements, leading to a substantial carbon footprint, particularly in regions relying on fossil fuels for energy.
7. <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/generative-ai-for-aviation> - This article explores how generative AI can transform the aviation industry by enhancing customer experiences through personalized travel recommendations and promotions, improving customer service with robust virtual assistants, and boosting operational efficiency through predictive maintenance and automated parts ordering. It highlights the potential of generative AI to address challenges in the aviation sector, including sustainability and operational efficiency.