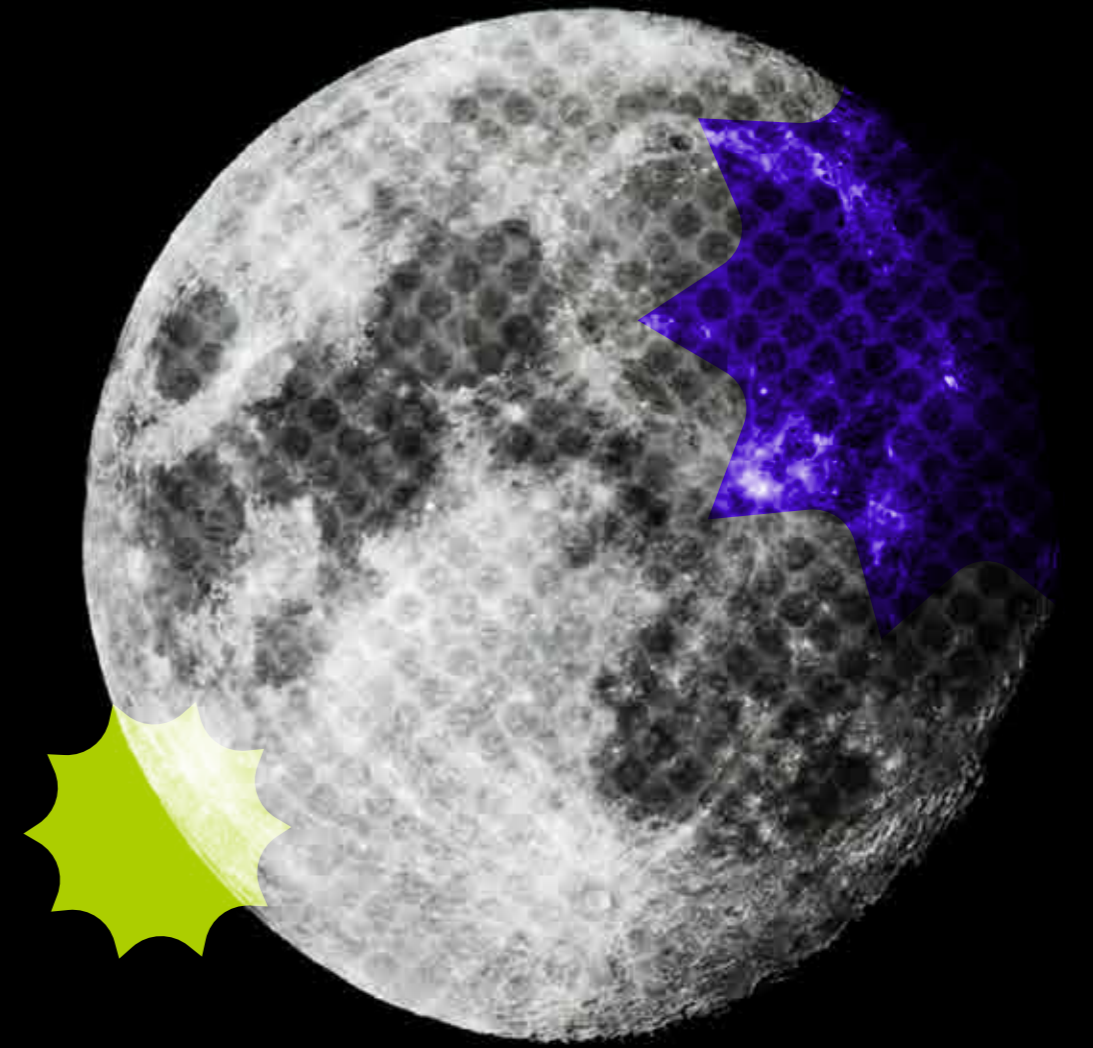
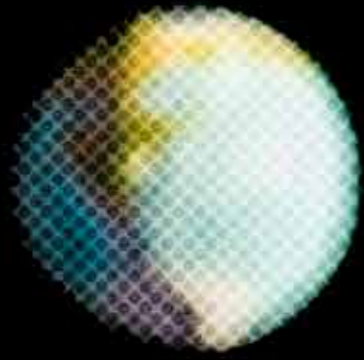


FLUME DIGITAL MARKETING

DIGITAL DIARY


Q1 2026





WELCOME TO 2026

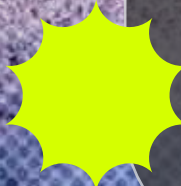
WELL... SORT OF



The digital world has welcomed us back – not just to a new year, but to a cultural shift that feels strangely 2016-esque. We’ve moved past the 80s-inspired “hipster” era and into a revival of Gen-Z’s neon roots: think pink hair, Supreme-era aesthetics, and the high-energy spirit of Snapchat and Pokémon Go.

But don’t be fooled – we’re not just hitting “undo”. From algorithmic languages to human-centred creativity and multi-modal ecosystems, we are “so back”... just with better tech and higher stakes.

Let’s step into the past to see the future.



QUICK RECAP

What Is Our DIGITAL DIARY?

Think of this as your **unfair advantage.**

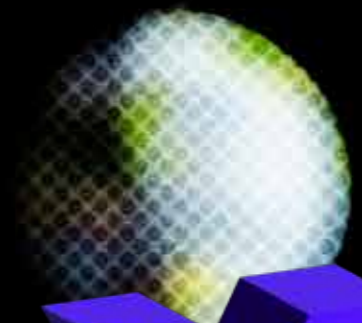
Flume's Digital Diary is where we cut through the industry noise and tell you what actually matters. No fluff, no recycled LinkedIn takes – just the shifts shaping how brands show up, sell, and stay relevant.

EACH MONTH, WE TRACK:

- What platforms are changing (so you're not caught slipping)
- What campaigns are hitting (and why)
- What audiences are actually doing (not what reports say they're doing)
- What tools are worth your time
- And what all of this means for brands trying to win

This isn't a trend report. It's a survival guide.

FEBRUARY



OPENAI / CHATGPT

There's a growing push toward high-scale authenticity – and a clear step back from over-relying on AI. "Real" storytelling is back.

THE RISE OF CONVERSATIONAL COMMERCE:

Messaging is the new storefront. Tools like ChatGPT are now part of the funnel, turning conversations into conversions.

ADVANCED PERSONALISED ADVERTISING:

Forget broad targeting. AI is enabling hyper-personalised ads that hit closer to real user intent.

THE EVOLUTION OF AD FORMATS:

Static ads are fading. Interactive, useful, two-way formats are taking over.

THE DATA & ANALYTICS MANDATE:


Without data, AI is guessing. Precision, measurement, and constant optimisation are now non-negotiable.

FLUME FOCUS:



AI isn't a shortcut. It's an interaction engine. Use it for efficiency – keep humans for empathy and accountability.



OUR CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER,
CHÉLIN RAMOS, SAYS:



As AI continues to reshape our industry, there's a
growing push for genuine, high-impact storytelling
– and a clear shift away from over-relying on AI.



THE GEMINI HIERARCHY:

SMARTER, NOT JUST BIGGER

Google has dropped the one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, it's building a stack of specialised models – each designed for a specific kind of thinking.

◆ Gemini 3 Pro (The Flagship)

The overachiever. Handles complex, multi-step reasoning and “vibe-coding” – understanding intent, not just instructions.

◆ Gemini 3 Flash (The Everyday Standard)

Fast, efficient, no fuss. High-level thinking at speed for day-to-day tasks.

◆ Gemini 2.5 (The Workhorse)

Built for scale. Massive context, heavy workloads, and cost-efficient variants that keep things moving.

Agentic Workflows: AI That Actually Does Things

This isn't just output anymore. Gemini can now act – running tasks, using tools, managing workflows, and getting things done without constant hand-holding.

The Think-Critique Loop:

It doesn't just answer. It plans, executes, and checks itself before delivering. Less guesswork, more self-correction.

Flume Focus:

The edge isn't doing more. It's deciding better. Set clear goals. Pick the right AI. Let it run. Stay accountable for the outcome.

MICROSOFT COPILOT: THE NEXT JUMP

AI isn't coming. It's here. And Microsoft just levelled up how work actually happens.

Work IQ: Your Team's Brain

Work IQ watches how your team works – emails, projects, habits – and tells you what matters, what's stuck, and what to tackle first. No spreadsheets. No guessing. Just a productivity map that actually helps.

Agent 365: AI That Plays Nice

Custom agents for finance, ops, compliance – whatever your team needs. Scales smoothly, keeps data tight, and gets the job done without drama.

Copilot Voice: Speak, Work, Done

Emails, meetings, info – handled by your voice. Hybrid teams, field crews, offices far away: everyone gets work done faster, smoother, and without friction.

Flume Focus:

Work smarter, not harder. Map priorities with Work IQ. Clear tasks with Agent 365. Cut admin with Copilot Voice. The edge? Work that flows, scales, and actually makes sense.



GENERAL TRENDS

AI isn't just helping anymore – it's running the show. Brands can now automate discovery, personalise at scale, and link up with creators like never before.

SMART CREATOR MATCHING:

Google's AI knows content and audiences inside out, turning influencer marketing from guesswork into data-driven matchmaking. Creators aren't just partners – they're growth engines.

CONTENT THAT SPEAKS EVERYWHERE:

Meta's AI dubbing blasts content across languages without remakes. More markets, more reach, faster.

FLUME FOCUS:

AI isn't a shortcut – it's the backbone. Your edge? How you steer it, not just that you switched it on.

AI IS RUNNING THE SHOW

AI IS SHIFTING FROM BEING AN ASSISTANT TO AN OPERATIONAL LAYER.

Google is doubling down on building tighter connections between brands, creators, and audiences – positioning itself as the middle layer that actually makes those relationships work. By exploring new ways for advertisers to source creator partnerships, AI is being used to deeply understand both content and audience behaviour, matching brands with creator communities that are primed to care.

The result? Creator influence is no longer just cultural – it's becoming directly tied to real business impact. Meanwhile, Meta continues to expand its AI dubbing rollout, now available in nine languages as of January 2026. The payoff is already showing up on Instagram – increased attention, broader reach, and faster cross-market scalability, with more languages still on the way.

MARCH

The image features the word "MARCH" in large, bold, blue 3D block letters. The letters are positioned on a grid background that transitions from a dark blue at the bottom to a light purple and pink at the top. The grid pattern is composed of small, repeating diamond shapes. The lighting is dramatic, with the top of the letters and the background grid being brightly lit, while the bottom and sides are in deep shadow, creating a strong sense of depth and three-dimensionality.

DEMOCRATISING CREATIVITY

AI is smashing the gap between idea and execution. Intuitive, language-driven tools mean you don't need technical chops to turn imagination into output. More people can create – and faster.

Audiences are warming to AI-generated content, especially in advertising. Acceptance isn't uniform – it's coexistence, not replacement. AI speeds production and expands what's possible, while humans stay in control of taste, intent, and judgment.

For creators, AI is already an economic force. Most say it helps grow their business, make work they couldn't otherwise, and boost the creator economy.

The real differentiator? Human storytelling. AI can churn content, but emotional resonance, cultural relevance, and meaning still come from people. Creativity becomes more accessible, not less human.

OUR CEO,
JACQUES DU-BRUYN,
SAYS:

More and more people are starting to embrace AI-generated content, particularly in advertising. This tells us that there's an **opportunity for us to co-exist with AI instead of being replaced by it**, or vice versa.

OUR FCPs

(FLUME CREATIVE PIONEERS)

Bigger, Bolder, Hard to Ignore:

Brands aren't tiptoeing anymore. They're going oversized, hyper-detailed, and in-your-face. Visuals that grab attention before a scroll can swipe past. Subtlety is out; impact is in.

Engage More Than Eyes:

Visuals aren't just seen – they're felt, tasted, heard, even imagined. 63% of consumers want multisensory experiences; 82% expect multiple senses when trying something new. The trick? Designing visuals that hint at texture, sound, and atmosphere to forge stronger emotional connections.

AI as a Creative Amp:

AI isn't the artist – it's the amplifier. Prompts now layer sensory cues, atmosphere, and tactility, letting brands simulate richer, immersive worlds digitally.

Flume Focus:

Don't hand the paintbrush to AI. Humans still drive authenticity. Treat AI as a fine-tuner, not the creator, and keep that human touch front and centre.

OUR FCPs

(FLUME CREATIVE PIONEERS)

High-Scale Authenticity Is Back:

Brands are dialling down AI polish and leaning into real human storytelling. Imperfection isn't sloppy – it's a signal that says, "We're real, we're credible, we stand out."

Colour with Feeling:

AI aesthetics skew clean and clinical. Brands fight back with bold colours, expressive illustrations, and warmer visuals. Personality matters. Emotional contrast cuts through the algorithmic monotony.

Characters That Stick:

Mascots, avatars, and recurring characters are making a comeback. They humanise AI-driven experiences, providing continuity, familiarity, and emotional connection across screens and real-world touchpoints.

Flume Focus:

AI is the helper, not the hero. Humans still drive authenticity. Treat AI as a fine-tuner, keep creativity human-led, and your storytelling resonates.

CREATIVE: DESIGN, MOTION, GRAPHICS, AND COPYWRITING

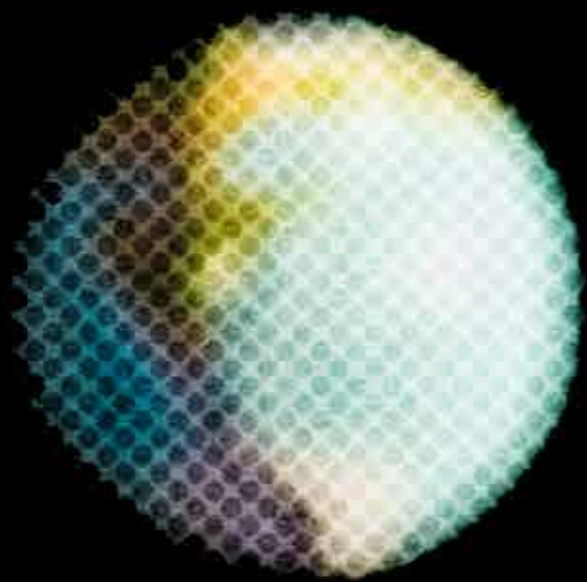
VISUALS THAT HIT ALL THE SENSES:

The brands that grab attention aren't subtle – they're massive, bold, and almost impossible to ignore. Big visuals, packed with detail, designed to spark sight, sound, touch, and even taste.

63% of people want multisensory experiences, and 82% expect as many senses engaged as possible when discovering something new. The trick? Layer depth, texture, and atmosphere into visuals – and use AI to craft prompts that hint at how things feel, sound, or smell, not just how they look.

FLUME FOCUS:

This isn't just design – it's a full-sensory handshake with your audience. Make them feel it, and they won't scroll past.



APRIL

FOR THE DEVY DEVS

AI Isn't Helping Anymore – It's Building:

AI has levelled up from coding sidekick to full-on workflow architect. Developers now oversee "agentic workflows", spinning features straight from natural language or design files. Beyond building, AI maps complex codebases instantly, turning logic and data flows into a living blueprint. Apps are now made to expect AI, not just bolt it on.

Meta-Frameworks Rule:

Platforms like Next.js and Nuxt aren't optional – they're the baseline. Routing, APIs, server actions – all in one place. The old backend? Mostly folded into a single frontend folder.

Backendless, Type-Safe Everything:

Plain JS is out. TypeScript is the default. Server functions and edge runtimes let frontend teams handle data layers without a traditional backend. Tools like tRPC glue it all together, keeping type safety tight and manual syncing obsolete.

Flume Focus:

The modern stack isn't just code – it's AI-powered, type-safe, and designed for speed.



THANK YOU

