

It's no surprise that great new content, hyper-personalisation, AI and improved user experience are top of the FAST agenda for 2024.

2023 witnessed a paradigm shift in consumer behaviour, technological advancements, and collaborative efforts within the industry. Viewers continued to migrate towards free ad-supported streaming services, drawn by the convenience of on-demand content, and industry giants expanded their libraries, offering even more content to cater to wider audiences.

As the popularity of streaming platforms continues to soar to new heights – and the price gap between ad-supported and ad-free tiers widens – we can expect FAST to become even more well entrenched in the year ahead.

Below, Russell Foy, [FAST Channels TV](#) CEO, provides invaluable insight into the future of FAST. So, what can we expect from the next 12 months?

Niche Content

2024 is the year of niche content. While relatively small, niche channels can be mighty, and demand for high-quality, authentic content will guide the streaming landscape this year. Anticipate media organizations to monetise niche genres to tap into more specialised audiences than ever before.

Sports on FAST

Expect to see more coverage of lower-league sporting events, too.

Live sports are already starting to pop up on subscription services as broadcasters begin to embrace streaming – it's a good medium for commercial placement and can promote wider coverage of more niche sports that are often behind a paywall. We're looking forward to seeing more sporting events migrate to FAST, with pop-up channels offering event exclusivity and packages that, for example, give NFL fans access to NFL games across the streaming ecosystem. And who knows, 2025 could see more major-league level sports embrace streaming.

Whatever happens, we'll be watching.

Brands and services launching their own FAST channels

We are beginning to observe a trend where brands are actively securing or producing content, strategically assembling FAST channels to directly introduce their product and advertisements to the market. Red Bull set an early precedent by creating and funding content to enhance brand visibility and product promotion. This pioneering move has inspired numerous other brands to follow suit, resulting in a growing influx of innovative services entering the market with their own FAST channels.

Enhanced User Experience

User experience will remain the keystone of 2024, with services investing in intuitive interfaces, improved content recommendations, and reduced ad interruptions.

Continued advancements in streaming technology, such as improved video quality, reduced latency, and better compression algorithms, will enhance the overall streaming experience for viewers. Additionally, emerging technologies like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) may find their way into the free ad-supported TV space, creating new and immersive viewing experiences.

Ad Spend

After a slightly bumpy start to 2023, ad spend is widely forecast to accelerate in 2024. Advertisers have embraced streaming, and are expected to increase their spending within the next year.

BIA Advisory Services projects CTV/OTT to be the fastest-growing media channel, with an increase of 39.5 per cent in ad spend from 2023. This robust growth not only underscores the efficacy of CTV in driving full-funnel outcomes but also highlights the expanding capabilities available to marketers. They now have greater access to brand-safe premium inventory, sophisticated audience targeting and advanced measurement tools to help them drive their businesses.

Looking ahead

2023 laid the groundwork for the evolution of free ad-supported TV, setting the stage for an exciting and transformative 2024 and beyond. With the convergence of data-driven insights, technological innovations, and strategic collaborations, the future of ad-supported streaming promises a more personalised, engaging, and globally accessible viewing experience. As the industry continues to adapt to changing consumer preferences, 2024 is poised to be a pivotal year in the evolution of free ad-supported TV.

Foy concluded: “2023 laid the groundwork for the advancement of free ad-supported TV, setting the stage for an exciting and transformative 2024 and beyond. Last year we predicted an explosion in the FAST space and we weren’t wrong. We saw video service providers and operators find their feet, now 2024 stands to be the most momentous year yet for free streaming, and here at FAST Channels TV we’re primed for the next stage of the FAST evolution.”

FAST Channels TV provides a comprehensive suite of services, enabling clients to adopt a gradual approach to deployment through a revenue-sharing model. This strategic approach minimises initial costs, allowing businesses to allocate more resources to their marketing endeavours. The simplest starting point is to launch your channel into the market using FAST Channels TV’s services. Once you achieve success, then consider expanding further by deploying additional channels, and even exploring the possibility of your own white-label platform and apps.

FAST Channels TV remains at the forefront of delivering advanced and adaptable solutions to the market. Its goal is to empower content owners and operators with the confidence to unlock the full potential of their existing content library. This includes building a global audience, optimising monetisation strategies, expanding channel lineups, and fostering new partnerships.