

Small Business Marketing Benchmarks

UK 2026

Channel performance benchmarks, cost metrics and conversion data for UK small and medium businesses.

May 2026

Introduction

This report compiles marketing performance benchmarks relevant to UK small and medium businesses with annual revenues between £250,000 and £10 million. The data is drawn from CM Beyer's client engagements, publicly available research from Google, Meta, HubSpot, Semrush and the Chartered Institute of Marketing, and aggregated performance data from the UK digital advertising market.

The benchmarks are intended as reference points, not targets. Individual performance depends on sector, geography, competitive intensity, creative quality and dozens of other variables. Use these figures to assess whether your current performance is broadly in line with the market — and to identify channels where you may be significantly over- or under-performing.

Digital Advertising Benchmarks

Google Ads (Search)

Metric	UK SME Average	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Click-through rate (CTR)	4.2%	6.8%+	Below 2.5%
Cost per click (CPC)	£1.85	£0.90–£1.30	£2.80+
Conversion rate	4.8%	8.2%+	Below 2.1%
Cost per conversion	£38	£14–£22	£65+
Quality Score (avg)	5.8/10	7+	Below 4

Meta (Facebook & Instagram)

Metric	UK SME Average	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
CPM (cost per 1,000 impressions)	£9.40	£5.50–£7.20	£14+
CTR (link clicks)	1.4%	2.2%+	Below 0.7%
Cost per lead	£18	£8–£12	£32+
ROAS (e-commerce)	2.8x	4.5x+	Below 1.5x
Creative fatigue onset	10–14 days	18+ days	Under 7 days

LinkedIn (B2B)

Metric	UK SME Average	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
CPC (sponsored content)	£4.80	£2.50–£3.50	£7.50+

CTR	0.8%	1.3%+	Below 0.4%
Cost per lead	£62	£28–£40	£95+
InMail response rate	12%	22%+	Below 6%

SEO & Organic Search

Metric	UK SME Average	Top Quartile	Notes
Organic traffic growth (12 months)	+18%	+45%+	With active content strategy
Pages indexed	85	200+	Excludes thin/duplicate
Domain authority (Moz)	22	35+	New sites start at 1–10
Avg. position (target keywords)	18.4	Top 10	50+ tracked keywords
Organic conversion rate	2.8%	5.1%+	Lead gen sites
Blog publishing frequency	2/month	4+/month	Consistent cadence key
Time to rank (new content)	4–8 months	2–4 months	Competitive terms

Email Marketing

Metric	UK SME Average	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Open rate	28%	38%+	Below 18%
Click-through rate	3.2%	5.5%+	Below 1.5%
Unsubscribe rate	0.4%	Below 0.2%	0.8%+
List growth rate (monthly)	+2.1%	+4.5%+	Declining
Revenue per email (e-commerce)	£0.12	£0.35+	Below £0.05

Website Performance

Metric	UK SME Average	Good	Needs Work
Page load time	3.8 seconds	Under 2.5s	Over 5s
Mobile traffic share	62%	—	—
Bounce rate	52%	Below 40%	Over 65%
Pages per session	2.4	3.5+	Below 1.5
Average session duration	2m 12s	3m+	Under 1m
Core Web Vitals pass rate	48%	100%	Below 30%

Marketing Budget Allocation

UK small businesses allocate an average of 6.4% of revenue to marketing, according to the Chartered Institute of Marketing. However, allocation varies significantly by growth stage: early-stage businesses investing in customer acquisition typically spend 10-15% of revenue, while established businesses in maintenance mode may spend as little as 3-5%.

The most common budget allocation error among SMEs is spreading spend too thinly across too many channels. CM Beyer typically recommends that businesses with monthly marketing budgets under £5,000 focus on no more than two primary channels, with budget concentrated enough to achieve statistically meaningful results and enable optimisation based on reliable data.

Typical Budget Allocation by Business Type

Channel	B2B Services	B2C / E-commerce	Local Services
Paid search (Google)	25%	30%	35%
Paid social (Meta/LinkedIn)	20%	35%	15%
SEO / content	25%	15%	20%
Email marketing	10%	10%	5%
Direct / field marketing	10%	5%	15%
Brand / creative	10%	5%	10%

How to Use These Benchmarks

Compare your current performance against the "UK SME Average" column first. If you are significantly below average on a channel you are actively investing in, there is likely a structural problem — poor targeting, weak creative, technical issues, or misaligned messaging. If you are at or above average, focus on reaching the top quartile through iterative testing and optimisation.

Do not use these benchmarks to justify abandoning a channel after a short trial. Most digital channels require 60-90 days of consistent investment to generate statistically reliable performance data. Decisions made on less than 30 days of data — or on budgets too small to generate meaningful sample sizes — are essentially guesses.

For a detailed review of your marketing performance against these benchmarks, contact CMB Insight at sales@cmbeyer.co.uk.

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