



The New Rules of Advertising

Surviving - and Thriving - as a Publisher
in the 2020s



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Introduction

The turn of the decade is a convenient time for reflection. January 1st 2020 was really no different from any other day. But the days and months that passed have radically changed the world.

The COVID-19 crisis has impacted media consumption patterns across the globe. Web traffic has spiked and there has been an influx of digital subscriptions. The biggest beneficiaries are local news sites, with more people going online to learn how the pandemic is affecting their home towns.

More than ever, for advertising, a moment of reflection and assessment is needed. The situation highlights the importance of being trustworthy and sensitive. And the need to give value to the audience through providing support.

Besides COVID-19 related factors, the world for media was rapidly changing anyway. The introduction of GDPR in 2018, the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in January 2020, the phasing out of 3rd party cookies – these all signal a new era of data privacy. Google estimates publishers stand to lose [52% of their revenues](#) once 3rd party cookies are abandoned.

At the same time, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are beginning to take root in advertising. This promises ever-greater levels of audience targeting and ad personalisation, enabling advertisers to serve more relevant content than ever – such that consumers may switch off their ad-blockers.

This new era requires trust to be regained on all sides, and greater levels of transparency. Consumers have grown wary of targeted advertising, the blunt tools hitherto available having bred distrust in the mechanisms that drive personalisation.

Advertisers have grown similarly cautious about ad fraud and ensuring their content is placed in brand-safe spaces. They demand greater transparency and control over placement, just as consumers demand the same for their personal data.

But the expanding galaxy of digital devices and channels (along with the technical infrastructure to serve richer, more immersive, more precisely matched content) presents a wealth of opportunity for advertisers and publishers both.

Times of change are always challenging. But with the right planning, the right tools, and the right guidance, they can also be the most exciting – and the most rewarding.

In this whitepaper, we'll be looking at where we are now, where we're going, and what you can do to thrive along the way.

Part 1.

Advertising in 2020

The digital landscape

Trust and transparency

Consumers are concerned about privacy

Advertisers are concerned about ad fraud and brand safety

Trust in the duopoly is eroding

Moving towards convergence



Advertising in 2020

Media consumption has been fragmenting ever since digital was introduced. That trajectory is no less true as we enter the 2020s.



Podcasts are increasingly popular. Streaming continues to spread, loaded with potential for Over-The-Top (OTT) advertising. Home voice assistants are proliferating and ripe for monetisation, and Digital Out-of-Home (DOOH) is a growing opportunity.

There has never been a greater variety of channels through which to reach consumers. But it requires an increasingly nuanced touch in content and strategy – particularly in light of intensifying privacy concerns.

In this environment, technology has become more important than ever. Both in supplying content to audiences, and in getting that content there in the first place.

Advertisers and publishers both require a strong framework that enables them to reach their target audiences however they are best reached, in the most efficient way – with transparency at every step.

" There has never been a greater variety of channels through which to reach consumers "

The digital landscape

Digital ad spend continues its rapid ascent. At the beginning of 2019, eMarketer projected that global [digital ad spending would increase by 17.6%](#), to take more than 50% of the market for the first time. By 2020, they projected it would account for 53.6% of global advertising spend.

While US digital ad spending was projected to reach 54.2% of ad spend in 2019 – taking the majority from traditional channels for the first time – the UK was expected to hit 66.4%, up from 63.8% in 2018.

Countries that Will Hit at Least 50% Digital Ad Spending in 2019

% of total media ad spending in each country

	2018	2019
China*	65.3%	69.5%
UK	63.8%	66.4%
Norway	61.7%	65.5%
Ireland	58.8%	62.6%
Denmark	57.8%	61.1%
Sweden	56.3%	60.3%
Australia	55.6%	57.1%
US	48.6%	54.2%
New Zealand	51.8%	54.0%
Canada	50.2%	53.5%
Netherlands	47.8%	52.6%
Russia	45.1%	50.0%

*Note: includes advertising that appears on desktop and laptop computers as well as mobile phones, tablets and other internet-connected devices, and includes all the various formats of advertising on those platforms; excludes SMS, MMS and P2P messaging-based advertising; *excludes Hong Kong*
Source: eMarketer, February 2019

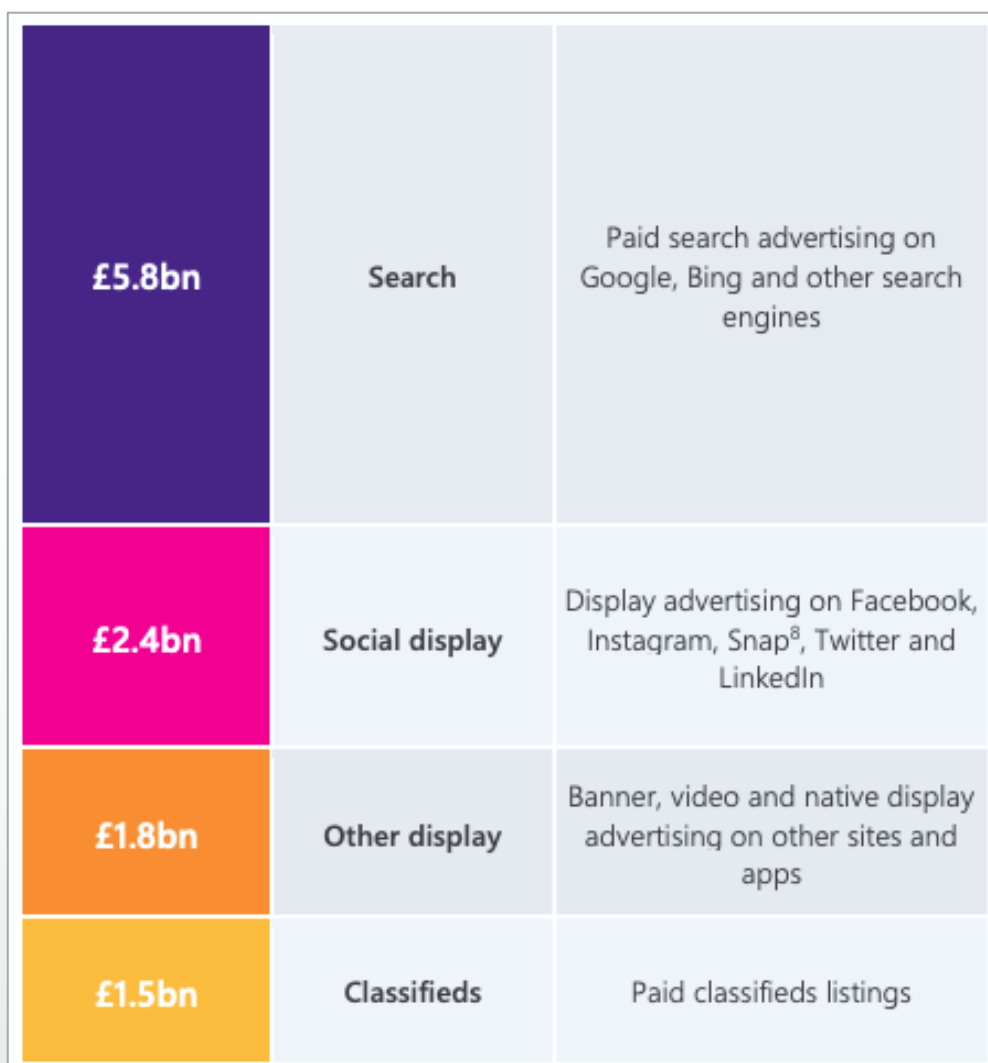
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www.eMarketer.com

Source: emarketer.com

This highlights the UK's position as a particularly strong market for digital. The UK is the third-largest online economy, behind only China and the US, spending a staggering [0.63% of the nation's GDP online](#). At £1,868 per person, UK retail ecommerce expenditure per capita is higher than any other G20 country.

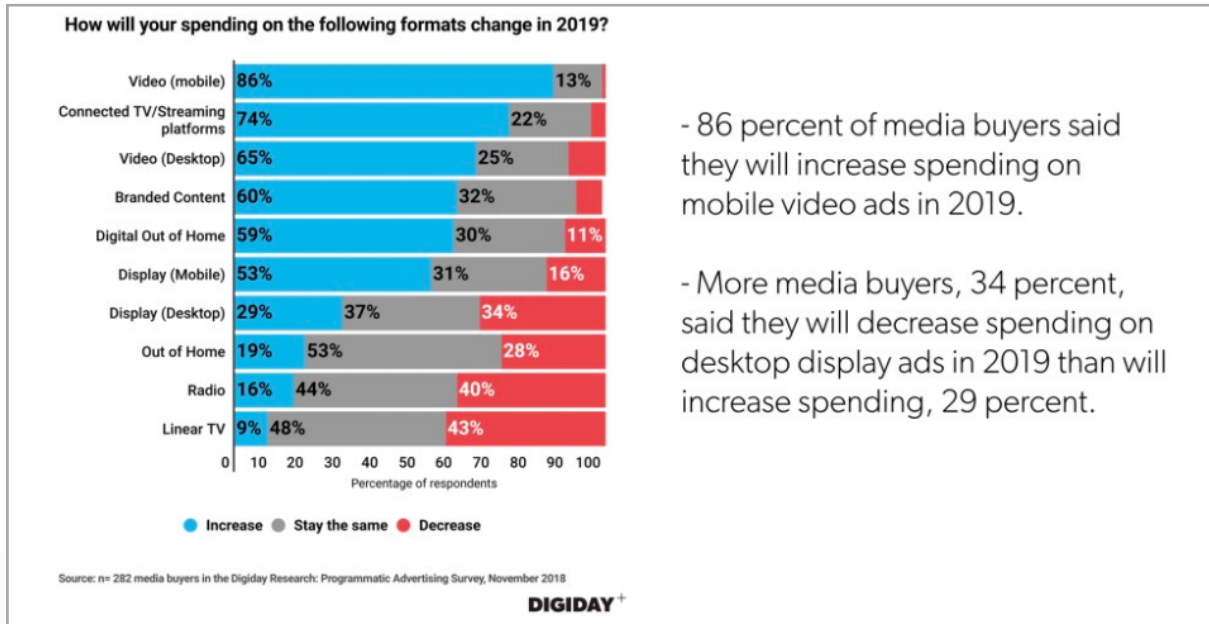
Examining the breakdown of online ad spend, we find that although display ads and social attract significant sums, the landscape remains dominated by search.



Source: [Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#)

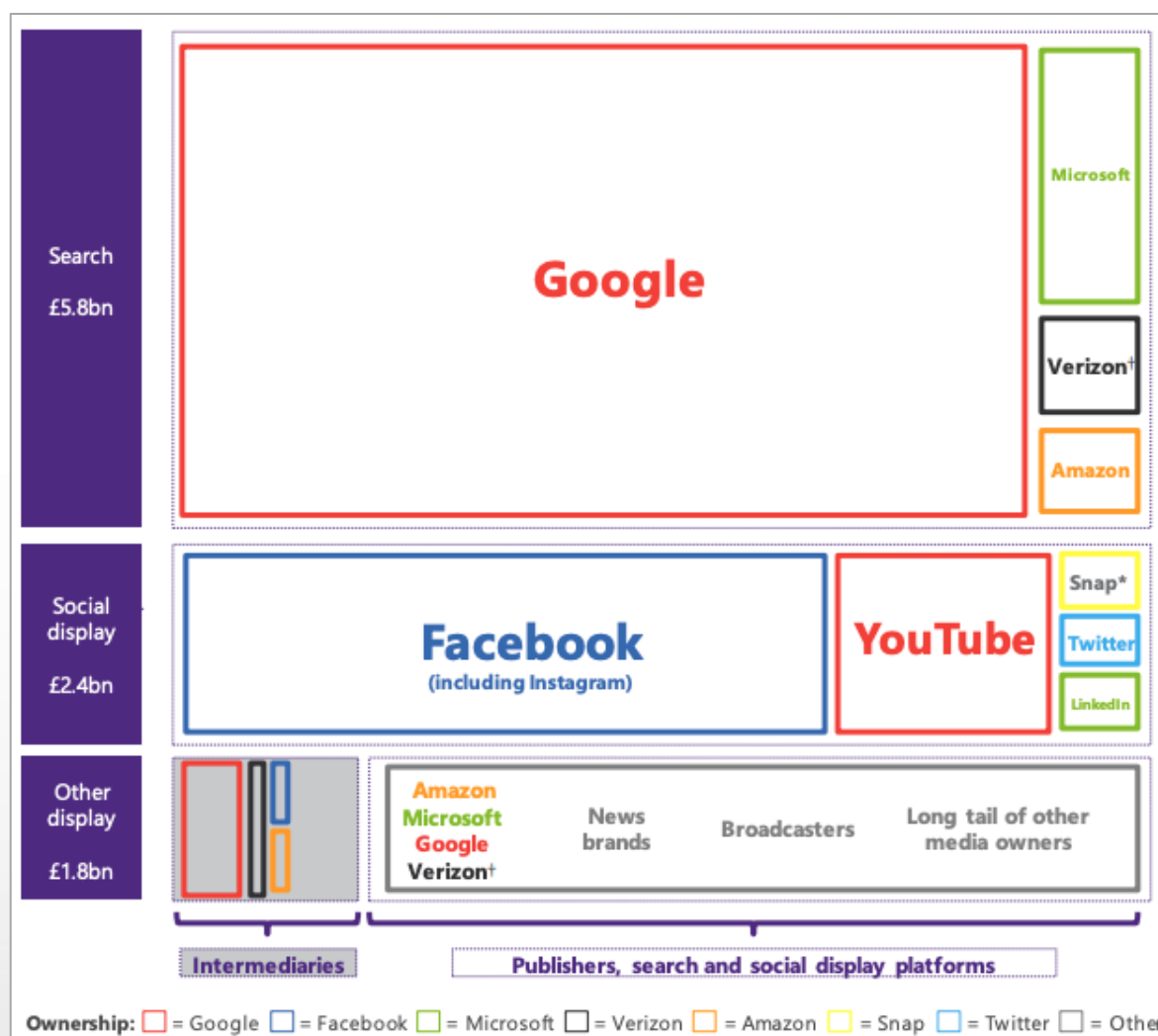
This could be due to the increasing proportion of SMEs advertising digitally. Search is highly efficient for businesses with lower budgets for content. Taken together, companies like these comprise a growing segment of online advertisers. In 2013, SMEs represented 30% of online ad spend. By 2017 (the most recent statistics available) they [accounted for 42%](#).

On the executive level, advertisers are increasingly investing in mobile video, at the expense of all other channels. A 2019 survey found that 86% of advertisers anticipated increasing their spend on mobile video, with significant minorities decreasing their investment in desktop, radio and TV.



Source: [Digiday](https://www.digiday.com/research)

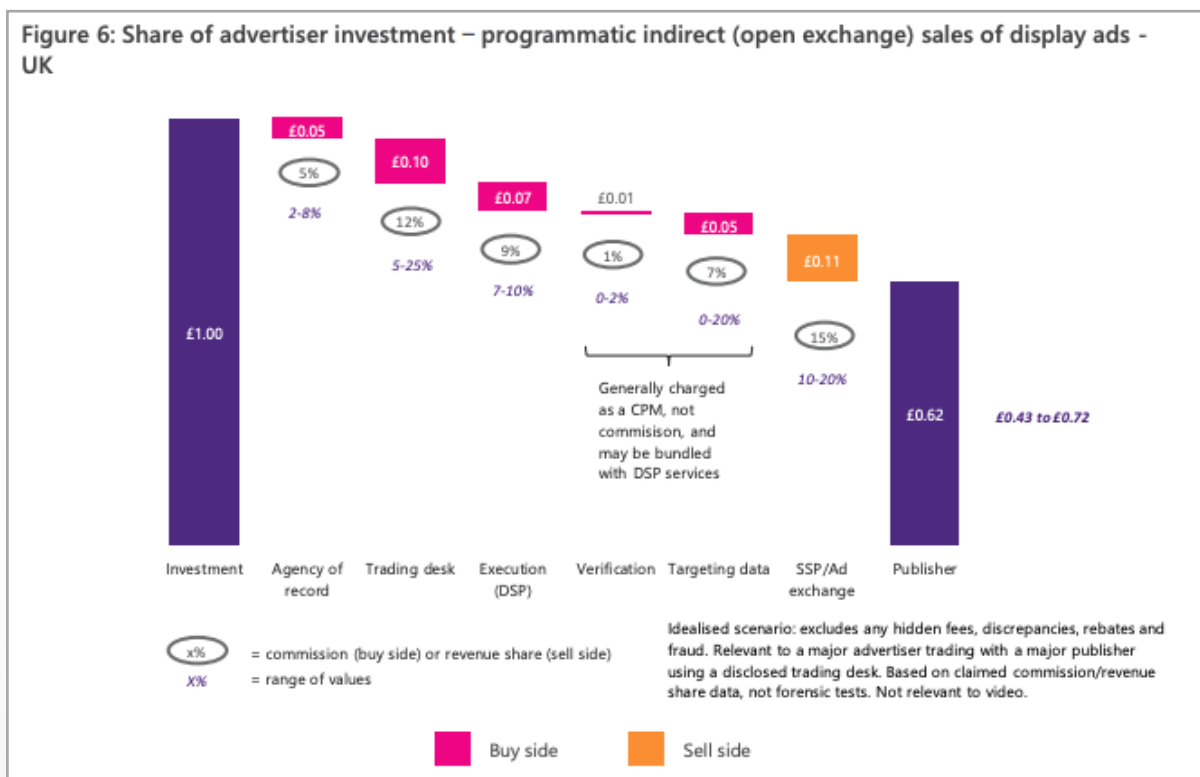
Digital advertising remains dominated by the Google/Facebook duopoly, with Amazon beginning to edge in.



Source: [Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#)

As it stands, publishers are relatively well served by these networks. Persistent complaints from content providers may even have increased the share they receive.

In 2016, The Guardian reported receiving “worst case” 30% of revenue for ads displayed by the paper online. In November 2018, they replicated the test of buying their own inventory. The Guardian Chief Revenue Officer said the test “[showed a split we were happy with](#)”.



Source: [Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#)

Trust and transparency

However, we are about to enter a new era of digital advertising, precipitated by growing concern over trust and transparency. This affects the way consumers receive ads, the way those ads are placed, and the networks that provide the infrastructure.

Consumers are concerned about privacy

Consumers have become far more educated about online privacy in recent years, catalysed by a number of headline events highlighting the issue.

Alleged Russian interference in the US election, the Cambridge Analytica scandal, persistent cries of “fake news” and the introduction of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – and the CCPA – have all made consumers warier both of how they receive content online, and the content itself.

It is within this context that 3rd party cookies are beginning their slow swansong. Mozilla’s Firefox already blocks them, as does Apple’s Safari. Google announced at the start of 2020 that Chrome would no longer accept third-party cookies as of 2022.

Previously the cornerstone of the digital advertising industry, the demise of 3rd party cookies makes 1st party data the most valuable commodity in the market. Not least because 1st party data is usually collected more transparently.

In a survey of 1,000 consumers, featured on [Social Media Today](#), 80% of respondents felt personalised ads for recently discussed items were an invasion of privacy. 54% felt the same way about ads based on search history. 52% felt that personalised ads were unethical.

However, the majority found retargeting actions helpful. Product recommendations based on purchase history (67.9%), birthday emails from the company (67.7%), reminder emails about items left in shopping carts (61.6%) and ads for recently visited websites (52.4%).

Advertisers are concerned about ad fraud and brand-safe spaces

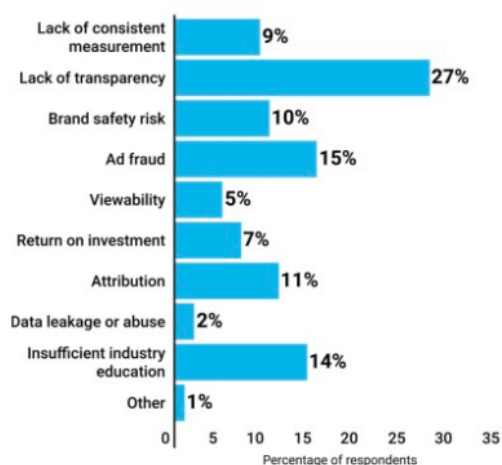
Trust and transparency permeate the buy-side as well. In the broadest sense, advertisers favour publishers that have the trust of their audiences. Advertising has always been about renting the relationship between publisher and audience, and the strength of that connection has never been more important than now.

This coincides with concerns from ad buyers around programmatic buying, which occupies a growing portion of advertising spend. The past few years have been dominated by algorithmically-driven programmatic direct. This has yielded two major issues: ad fraud and inappropriate placement

Ad buyers are increasingly concerned that placements bought programmatically do not reach the eyeballs they're paying for. Instead, impressions from bots eat into their budgets. A parallel concern is ads finding their way to brand-inappropriate spaces.

Transparency is a concern with programmatic buying

What is your biggest concern about programmatic advertising?



- 27 percent of media buyers said the greatest concern they have with programmatic advertising is the lack of transparency.

Source: n= 282 media buyers in the Digiday Research: Programmatic Advertising Survey,

November 2018

DIGIDAY+

Source: [Digiday](https://www.digiday.com/research/programmatic-advertising-survey/)

In this new decade, we are seeing a shift from programmatic direct to programmatic guaranteed. The process grants advertisers greater control over where their ads are shown and who they are shown to. And it affords more robust transparency concerning who has viewed the advert.

Programmatic guaranteed also cuts down on manual processes, and provides the potential for greater efficiency of spend; by virtue of greater audience control.

Trust in the duopoly is eroding

Just as Google and Facebook's hands are strengthened by the phasing out of 3rd party cookies – each possessing enormous tracts of 1st party data, coupled with far-reaching networks – trust in both organisations is eroding.

As such, there is a widening space in the market for alternative publishers that can provide similar levels of targeting, but are more trusted by their audiences, and can offer a more transparent ad buying process.

The most immediate example in the UK is [The Ozone Project](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/11/the-ozone-project) – a collaboration between News UK, The Guardian and The Telegraph which aims to offer precisely this. If The Ozone Project is a success, it will likely set a template for other alternative providers.

This underlines the importance of 1st party data. Successful publishers are those that know their audience inside out and can plug their clients into that knowledge. The demise of 3rd party cookies does not mean the end of 3rd party data. But it does make it harder to come by. As such, it will be increasingly important for publishers to find their own, direct sources of customer data.

The advantage is that this information will have been given willingly and transparently, contributing to the trust placed by the consumer in the content being served. A [2019 Accenture survey](#) found that 73% of respondents were willing to share personal information if brands were transparent about how it is used, up from 66% in 2018.

Moving towards convergence

The irony is that the response to this fragmentation – of channels, platforms, providers and publishers – is convergence.

As consumers' media consumption fragments, reaching an audience via one channel is increasingly untenable. For example, if you want to display your content to a Guardian reader, they might access a relevant story via a phone/tablet app, e-reader edition, through their desktop browser, in print, or as a podcast. Individual readers may favour particular channels, but they are bound to move between them to some extent.

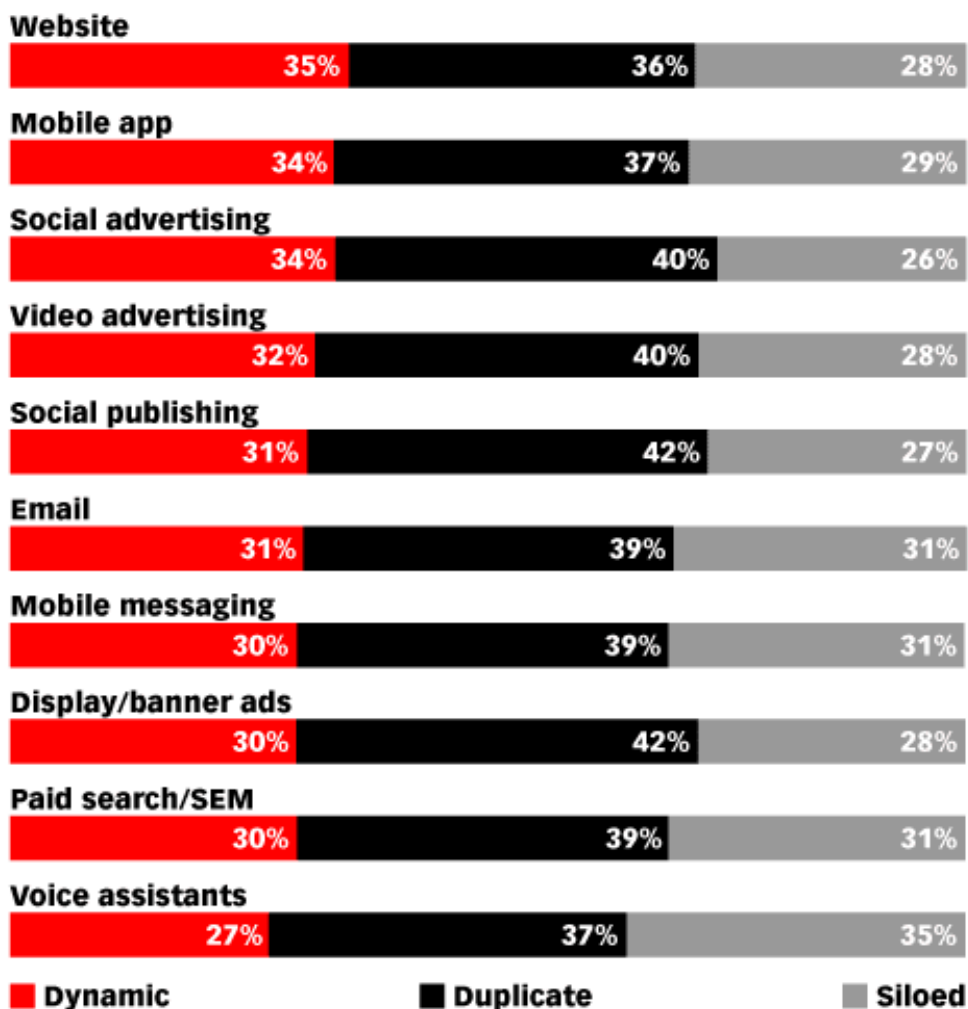
As such, content must become channel-agnostic to some degree, while ensuring it is appropriate for each device. Video works for apps and browsers, audio for podcasts and home speakers.

The best emerging strategies are those that operate across media, across devices, and account for the consumer's journey between these channels.

Achieving such a holistic strategy requires centralised data and centralised processes. The advertising industry still tends to be organised in silos, separating traditional and new media, search and social, and so on – on both the buy and sell side.

How Do Marketers Worldwide Describe Their Marketing Cross-Channel Coordination?

% of respondents, by channel, Sep 2018



Source: Salesforce, "State of Marketing: Fifth Edition," Dec 13, 2018

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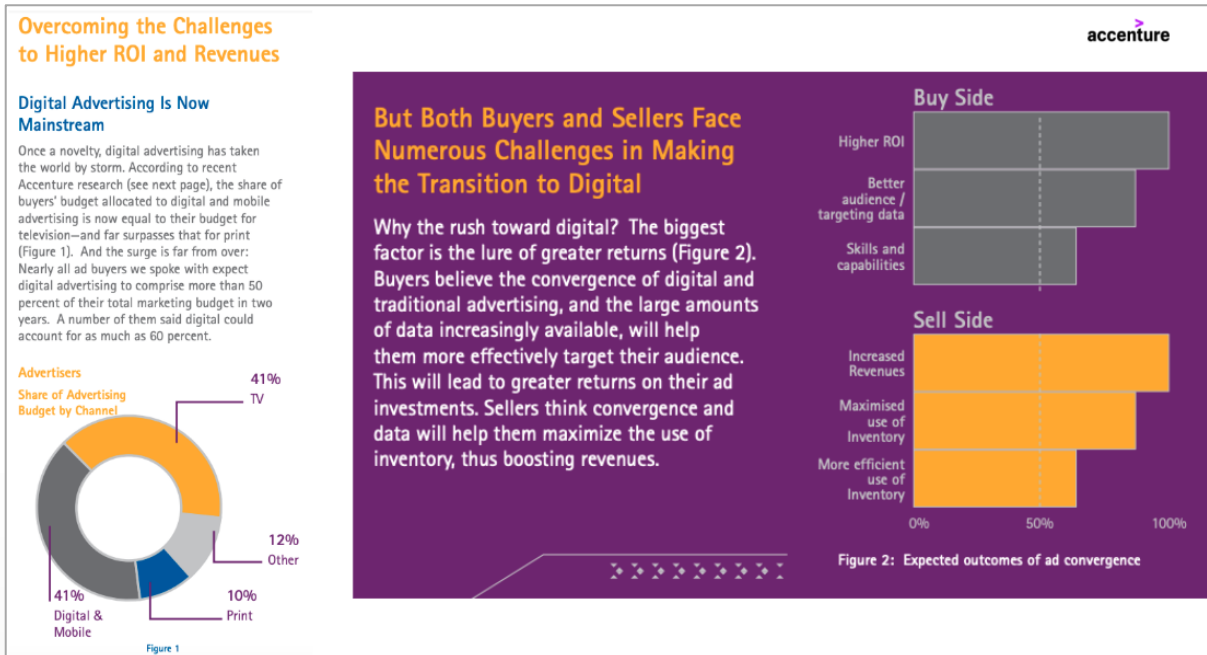
www.eMarketer.com

Source: emarketer.com

As consumers become device-agnostic, so must advertisers and publishers if their messages are to resonate.

Although this requires a shakeup of systems, silos and software, those on both the buy and sell side agree that in the long-term, convergence presents more opportunities than challenges.

Of the executives surveyed by Accenture, nearly all on the buy side expected higher ROI and better targeting data. Nearly all on the sell side expected higher revenues and maximised use of inventory.



Source: [Accenture](#)

The feeling is that converging both content and data will enable advertisers to better target consumers, designing more holistic campaigns, with more transparency over how they are targeted. Systems will be more efficient. Spending will be more efficient. And customers will be happier to receive advertising, making them less inclined towards ad-blocking, and more likely to respond to the advert

Part 2.

Forecasting the future

AI and machine learning: making big data accessible

Diversification

Traditional media: not dead yet

Data convergence: the solution of fragmentation



Forecasting the future

As advertising becomes ever more digital, data will play an increasingly central role – even more so than now. But as we enter a new phase of digital advertising, typified by hardening attitudes to privacy and personalisation, use of that data requires an increasingly sophisticated touch. One that is better at treating people as people, rather than patterns.

Just as data will be pivotal to targeting ad serves, it will begin to play a greater role in determining the content itself; bleeding into a creative process that must account for a ballooning ecosystem of media, devices and customer journeys.



The advertising trends of the near future will be technological, yes. But by and large, that technology will be used to sharpen the relatively blunt tools we're familiar with now. It will enable advertisers and publishers to better serve customers as individuals, in a way that is sensitive to their concerns.

"Technology will be used to sharpen the relatively blunt tools we're familiar with now"

AI and machine learning: making big data accessible

Perhaps the biggest trend already emerging is the growing acceptance of AI and machine learning in advertising circles.

The shift will principally be a result of AI platforms becoming friendlier. Where once AI and machine learning appeared as forbidding black boxes to the less technically minded, interfaces are becoming more accessible. Natural Language Processing (NLP) is increasingly prevalent, allowing non-technical people to engage with highly technical processes. Software as a Service (SaaS) enables organisations to access massive processing resources via a normal web browser.

AI has already been behind much of programmatic advertising, quietly determining the outcome of AdWords bids, the frequency of Facebook serves and so on. The difference will be the permeation of AI into other areas of advertising.

AI for targeting

The use of AI and machine learning for targeting is the most obvious use case in advertising. Consider how current CRM systems are used to identify high-value targets. People who downloaded an ebook, for example, may be considered hotter leads than those that didn't perform that action.

AI can take that data and balance it against more detailed information regarding longer-term actions. It might reveal that downloading an ebook isn't the value-add assumed. Instead, it may discover a pattern of users who visited a specific subpage at a specific time of day and bought product x an average of 29 days later – uncovering a higher value segment you weren't even aware of.

This simple, illustrative example only hints at the possibilities. But even this primitive approach can yield enormous results. One case study cited by the Marketing Artificial Intelligence Institute described how Australian experience company RedBalloon averaged a [1,100% return on ad spend](#), while cutting marketing costs by 25%.

By parsing volumes of data no human could, AI identified customer segments they didn't know they appealed to, and gave a reality check on who their core customer base was.

The massively improved level of targeting precision will extend as deep as it will wide. Processing all this data will allow an unprecedented level of granularity that enables advertisers to optimise content placement based on factors like time of day and the weather, cross-referenced against individuals' profiles.

AI for content

In late 2018, Lexus debuted the first advert [entirely scripted by artificial intelligence](#). The AI was fed data from 15 years of award-winning car adverts, plus additional data to ensure the result stayed on-brand, and didn't just repeat successes of the past.

Was it a PR stunt? Probably. But it was also an early window into AI's future role in content creation.

On a more prosaic level, Google has already introduced AI recommendations into its AdWords platform. Machine learning fuels campaign recommendations about bid strategies and so forth, but it also generates copy variations based on past performance, existing ad copy, and material from your landing pages.

If you've used the 'smart compose' feature of Gmail, you'll have some understanding of the quality currently achievable with Google's AI, making it a basic, but serviceable early example.

However, as the technology improves, expect machine learning to create personalised ad variations based on consumers' individual personality profiles.

Recent research by the [Society for Consumer Psychology](#) discovered that, for example, extroverted people preferred simple images that featured people. Open-minded people responded most to pictures with no people and cool colours like blue and black. Neurotic people liked calm, non-stimulating scenes.

Diversification: of channels, content and revenue streams

Another already-present trend that will undoubtedly continue its trajectory is diversification. Of everything.

As discussed above, more channels are constantly opening up. Mobile gaming. Connected TVs. VR. Digital audio is of increasing importance. A 2019 survey of UK media and ad agency managers found [85% were intending to increase spend on podcast ads](#) over the coming year. Home voice assistants are extending the digital audio segment.

The inexorable rise of streaming is creating new opportunities for advertisers – and new competition for linear TV. Until now, streaming in the UK has been a duopoly of Amazon and Netflix. Now BritBox, Disney, and others are all entering the market. Meanwhile, customers report they are only willing to spend £20 per month on subscriptions. Inevitably, subscriptions will saturate, and many commentators project a rise in OTT advertising to make up the shortfall.

In an environment of perpetually increasing competition, publishers are already experimenting with diversified revenue streams. Early case studies can be seen in the traditional newspaper industry. Papers like The Guardian and The New York Times have been experimenting with a mixture of paywalls, reader contributions, events, sponsored content and innumerable other sources of income beyond their core offering.

For publishers, such diversification is a matter of survival. For advertisers, each new stream is another opportunity to reach consumers.

But accommodating such a mix also requires a diversification of content. The same display ad won't work in every context. Instead, video ads may need to be cut to accompany text, longer versions for OTT, an audio iteration for podcasts and home assistants, and even a sponsored VR experience for premium subscribers. We are only at the tip of this iceberg.

Advertisers have already begun – rightfully – to experiment with producing variations of the same ad to be delivered in different contexts. Cold sore relief medication company Abreva ran [119 variations of the same YouTube ad](#) to appeal to differing audiences.

If the ad appeared during a celebrity gossip video, viewers were served copy that said “You can’t get rid of celebrity breakups. But you can get rid of cold sores in 2.5 days” overlaid on images of young people open-mouthed at whatever they were seeing on their phones. If you were watching a makeup tutorial, you saw “Keep amazingly pouty lips, but lose cold sores” over images of blusher and concealer. This AI-assisted granular targeting achieved a 41% boost in ad recall and a 342% increase in searches.

Traditional media: not dead yet

For all the focus on digital, traditional media will continue to play a role. Linear TV, radio and print are simply not concerns for some brands, but they remain fundamental to others.

And print can be more effective than digital. In a [report by Newsworks](#), it was found that:

- 72% of readers recalled print ads. 28% of readers recalled digital ads
- Branding is 107% stronger in print advertising than digital
- 46% of readers say print ads are easy to understand, against 19% for digital ads
- Readers are 190% more likely to say print ads are interesting to them – 32% vs 11%
- Print ads lead to higher response rates. RAMetrics data shows:
 - Higher levels of web visits – 13% for print vs 7% for digital
 - Greater intention to purchase – 11% for print vs 4% for digital
 - More recommendations – 23% for print vs 6% for digital
 - More discussions – 13% for print vs 4% for digital

The report concluded that although readers of print are a dwindling minority, those that are left are more attentive. Adding newspapers to the marketing mix can therefore drastically increase the campaign’s effectiveness. It just depends if a brand’s audience are the kind of people that still engage with print.

Digital developments are forcing a return to traditional media as well. As privacy laws like the EU GDPR and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) come into play – along with the 3rd party cookie phase-out – some commentators are predicting an uptick in broadcast media spend. Although linear TV and radio audiences are declining, they’re still the surest route to the largest numbers of eyeballs – or ear canals.

An early indicator that a partial return to mass media spending is on the cards is a rise in Digital Out of Home (DOOH) impacts – up [36% in 2019](#) over 2018.

Urban clustering means DOOH is primarily seen by younger, arguably harder to reach consumers. Even Generation Z – typically allergic to mass media – can’t escape billboards and bus stops. And location-data based ad serves are beginning to personalise the content served OOH, too.

The key is treating traditional media as part of the overall mix. Although some people still favour physical newspapers and mass broadcast media, they do not live in a bubble. They will surely also access digital media alongside. Traditional mustn’t forget digital, and digital mustn’t ignore traditional.

Data convergence: the solution to fragmentation

Advertisers already find themselves in an increasingly fragmented world. They must run campaigns across more channels, with more individual content variations – and do so with more restricted access to customer data than before.

Orchestrating such nuanced, omnichannel, personalised campaigns requires contiguous, 360 customer data – especially if AI is to parse through it all.

As such, the importance of dismantling data silos will become more important as time goes on. Publishers will increasingly converge their data in order to serve buyers looking to place cross-channel ads with near-infinite variety. The more precisely they can target their content to your audience, the higher value your inventory becomes.

And the ability to serve content based on factors like time of day, weather, contextual content and customer location makes it easier to fill that inventory.

Serving this demand will catalyse more and more publishers to overhaul their backend systems to make it easier for advertisers to use AI-assisted modelling to create lookalike audiences from your data, place multichannel ad orders in a single click, and run increasingly sophisticated variate testing.

The drive for efficiency within such complex campaigns may well see the consolidation of CDPs and DMPs into a handful of common data platforms – alongside multi-publisher conglomerates like The Ozone Project – so that ad buyers are instantly familiar with how to self-order and self-optimize campaigns across multiple publishers.

This data convergence will yield more sophisticated use of data, such that consumer unease at the blunt ad personalisation of today gives way to an appreciation of highly targeted content, that provides more utility – with a precisely matched aesthetic – to its viewer.

Part 3.

Preparing yourself

Know your audience

Cultivate band loyalty

Collaborate – internally and externally

Streamline your organisation

Become a leader

Enlist technology



Preparing yourself

The 2020s then, are emerging as a decade where advertising is increasingly fragmented; taking place across an inexorably rising number of channels, with growing expectations of progressively granular personalisation.

Servicing this personalised, omnichannel demand requires an expanding body of data, just as consumers have become warier about the use of that data. A wariness that is progressively backed by robust new laws.

In the face of such a challenging environment, what can publishers do to best serve their clients and continue to attract advertising revenue?



"If the heart of your business is the company culture – and the people that embody that – technology is the arteries"

Know your audience

As advertisers seek to target and personalise consumers with ever-greater levels of granularity, the better you know your audience, the better you can service that need.

That makes gathering 1st party data a priority. Website analytics, user accounts, purchase histories, customer surveys, CRM data – the more you can build up a 360 picture of your customers, the better able you are to monetise that audience.

Create unique audience profiles to guide targeting for ad buyers. Optimise your data so it is easily accessible, good quality, and not locked in silos. Ensure your team knows what to do with 1st party data to make it useful.

Armed with this information, you will be better placed to service clients, yes. But you'll also better serve your audience - boosting the trust they have in your brand.

Cultivate brand loyalty

Earlier, we touched on the importance of trust between publishers and their audiences – and the value that adds to ad buyers.

This is important in obtaining 1st party data in the first place. Consumers are increasingly reticent to hand over their information unless they trust the organisation they're handing it to. But it's just as important in ensuring the effectiveness of ads when they're served. The more loyalty a customer has to your brand, the more interested they will be in the content you serve them – paid or otherwise.

Part of this equation is in deciding what products and services to advertise to them. As AI becomes a greater part of this process, machine learning models can help to create personalised customer experiences and targeted offers that go beyond selling products and services, instead, cementing customer loyalty and lifetime value. Genuinely discovering what your customers want, providing products and services to match.

How you achieve brand loyalty depends on your audience. Generation Z, for example, tend to favour brands that are vocal about issues like human rights, race and sexual orientation. They also value platforms that look after their personal data, actively combat fake news and shield them from offensive content.

The potential for reward is high. A 2014 study by neuroeconomist [Paul Zak](#) found that three out of eight people release more oxytocin when they think of their favourite brands than their spouses. Oxytocin is the hormone we release when we're touched or hugged – popularly referred to as the “love hormone”.

If you can engender that kind of feeling in your audience, your brand will be incredibly valuable to your clients.

Collaborate – internally and externally

In this increasingly fragmented media environment, advertisers look to create more cohesive, omnichannel campaigns: either screen-agnostic or that accompany consumers between devices and media, adapting for every step of the customer journey.

To achieve that goal, advertisers need publishers to be able to offer a frictionless service that doesn't put up barriers between channels, departments, and data silos. And to sell that kind of service, your whole organisation needs to be pulling in the same direction.

Find ways to tear down silos. Forge better communication between departments. Examine your technology and how it interacts across the organisation. Implement new solutions that operate across the enterprise, eliminating any blockages.

Does Sales know what invoices have been raised or are in query? How does Ad Ops communicate with Sales? How do sales managers know what's in the pipeline, so they can accurately forecast?

Collaboration should run externally, too. The cracks in Google and Facebook's digital duopoly may be beginning to show, but they still operate at a scale other publishers can't hope to emulate – with vast troves of customer data.

The Ozone Project is an excellent, sector-specific example of how pooling resources can create a better value-proposition for ad buyers. But that, too, will only work if all the systems in your multi-publisher alliance are in harmony.

Streamline your organisation

As advertisers seek to run ever more complex campaigns, it becomes more vital than ever that your organisation makes it easy to do so.

That means taking a hard look at your internal inefficiencies, tackling manual processes, data duplication and silos. Anything that may present an obstacle to seamless service for your clients. Then go one step further and identify improvements that may provide value your clients hadn't thought of.

You might, for example, consider selling packages that include print. This ensures print continues providing revenue for you, while reminding clients of its efficacy.

Achieving that requires there to be no barriers between traditional and digital. It requires a hard look at what may by now be redundant processes – just because you've always done something a certain way doesn't mean that's how it should be done today.

And it means ensuring your sales teams are skilled in selling across all platforms, so they can guide buyers towards the best mix of channels and media to reach the right segment(s) of your audience. This may necessitate extra training.

For full-scale, organisation-wide change like this, all stakeholders need to be open to change. An ethos of adaptability must run through the business. The decade ahead is likely to be a churn of constant development. The only way to survive is to evolve along with it.

Become a leader

Achieving the kind of company ethos that is open and willing to constant adaptation requires leadership. Internal infrastructure must be agile to keep up with – or ahead of – current trends, both technologically and organisationally. In a digital-first world, traditional publishers must be able to compete with the digital-only.

This dynamic attitude must permeate every area of the organisation, ensuring your company is easy to do business with, through the entire Quote to Cash to Invoice process. Instilling such an attitude in a legacy organisation will require a steady hand.

Ensure you retain the right people. They are the ones that will determine the success or failure of your evolution. Cultivate an agile culture that encourages contributions from all parties. Implement the technology that serves this culture. Technology should be an enabler of change, not an obstacle.

Don't forget the basics. Make sure you are compliant with GDPR and any other regulations. The UK is leaving the EU in 2020 but has already committed to retaining GDPR under a different name.

Ensure you can measure viewability and campaign effectiveness, so your clients have a detailed view of their ROI. In an era driven by data, hard numbers are the surest path to repeat business.

These steps are, in truth, the bare minimum. The biggest rewards for publishers are in becoming a leader not just internally, but within the industry. In an environment that prizes innovation, publishers that are quick to incorporate new ideas and technology will earn first-mover advantage.

Enlist technology

If the heart of your business is the company culture – and the people that embody that – technology is the arteries.

Technology has undergone step-change evolution in recent years, and many publishers may be intimidated by the scale of change required to adapt to the coming decade. The key is to start small and scale up, implementing forward-thinking technology that can develop along with you.

We recommend starting with these three areas: data and analytics, systems integration, and automation.

Data and analytics

It should be clear by now that data and analytics are the foundation for ad sales in the current and coming environment.

Publishers need a full 360-degree view of their customers. It must cross channels, devices and media as much as possible – and the data must not be siloed. Any barriers between departments or data sources undermine the value of the data and create unnecessary friction in the process.

Robust tracking must be in place to allow comprehensive measurement of campaign performance – both for detailed ROI reporting to demonstrate value to clients, and as a basis for future optimisation. Supplying data to fuel AI and machine learning campaign development will become increasingly essential as the technology burrows deeper in the industry.

With advertisers designing multimedia, omnichannel campaigns – and your salespeople selling diversified, cross-channel packages – it is essential that this data is centralised to form a ‘single source of truth’.

Systems integration

Achieving the kind of frictionless, holistic model we’ve discussed necessitates tight system integration. Integrating internal systems such as those used by Sales and Operations supports the 360, single source of truth data model, but also helps drive efficiency. Closing the loop by linking with external systems such as DSPs and SSPs also enables greater use of programmatic.

It is essential that this integration is built to allow for future developments. We cannot possibly predict every software innovation of the future, so it must be adaptable; most likely developed on an open API so modules can be plugged in as needed.

For example, Salesforce is built to accommodate a variety of apps that allow you to build on your platform as you grow, evolving your offering over time. These allow you to, for example, utilise blockchain to combat ad fraud or securely extend your CRM externally – using Salesforce’s low-code blockchain builder – investing as and when you’re ready.

Automation

Having achieved tighter integration – replacing disparate emails, spreadsheets and CRMs with a single system – publishers can explore automation in ad sales.

Systems like Salesforce often include automated workflow solutions that can drive efficiency and ensure your sales team are speaking to the right leads at the right time. Salesforce can, for example, generate alerts prompting sales calls to prospects. These alerts could be triggered by a specified amount of time having passed since last contact, a visit to a webpage or as a follow-up to an email campaign.

Even simple automations like these can have powerful effects on the efficiency – and efficacy – of your processes.

Conclusion

"Data is everywhere - but what's essential is one single source of the truth"

The emerging trends of advertising are fraught with contradictions:

- An increasing reliance on data, while consumers become less willing to part with their personal information
- A wider fragmentation of media consumption, necessitating its convergence and consolidation for advertisers

A shift towards more 'human' marketing – targeting people rather than patterns, adjusting content to their sensibilities, ensuring placement works in context – that requires more data than ever.

[47% of marketers](#) surveyed by Arm Treasure Data said their biggest challenge to gaining insight from data was that it was siloed or difficult to access. **20% said they didn't have the know-how or capacity to extract insights.** The volume of data, or obstruction by data privacy laws like GDPR, barely factored.

Technology and data are not the sole solutions to the challenges ahead. But ensuring your data is optimised, and that you have the right technological tools to hand – adaptable to continual change – is half the battle. Implementing a strategy for first- and second-party data will be crucial in the new digital decade. Data is everywhere - but what's essential is one single source of the truth.

We are still in a period of transition, and there is still an opportunity to get out in front. Those that don't risk being left behind.

That's why we developed BrightMEDIA: to support your evolution into the new decade – and beyond.

BrightMEDIA

Helping you adapt to the new rules of advertising

BrightMEDIA is BrightGen's ad sales platform for publishers. It takes the world's number one CRM – Salesforce – and extends it with bespoke functionality specifically developed for publishers.

It was designed to form the backbone of modern publishers' systems, running a thread through every stage of the process – from sale to delivery, quoting to invoicing, audience profiling to post-campaign analysis. 360 customer data, integrated workflows, efficient, silo-free processes – everything we have discussed in this whitepaper.

Based on the Salesforce Platform – that supports REST API, SOAP API and Bulk API – BrightMEDIA even integrates with common external systems like Jitterbit, Mulesoft and GAM360 servers; enabling your current systems to simply plug in to it.

BrightMEDIA is endlessly flexible: providing support where you need it, integrating where you're already covered, and with infinite potential for future adaptation.

Learn more about BrightMEDIA at www.brightgen.com/brightmedia.



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