

MARKETING

Programmatic branding a missed opportunity as open exchanges subside: Forrester

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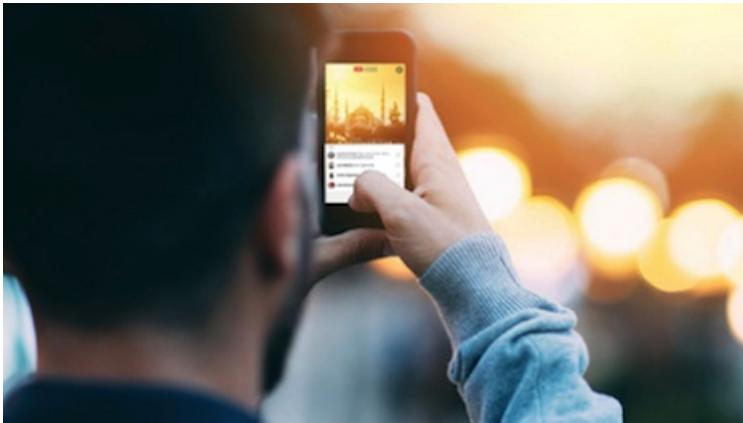


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Marketers need to make branding a strategic priority in their programmatic buying programs to address how storytelling today is cross-channel, according to a new report from Forrester Research.

While 61 percent of marketers including branding in their programmatic objectives, currently only 13 percent say they use programmatic buying mostly for branding while 39 percent use it primarily for direct response. The report, Brief: Use Programmatic Media to Boost Branding, reveals that marketers agree programmatic can build branding but few have implemented a strategy with this in mind.

"Our research found widespread agreement that programmatic buying can serve branding objectives, but little evidence pointing to deliberate, tactical strategies to use it for branding," said Samantha Merlivat, an analyst at [Forrester Research](#) and lead author for the report.

The report is based on a survey of digital marketers and media agency executives in charge of programmatic media buying.

Better quality impressions

Some marketers believe programmatic is not fit to drive branding. However, programmatic buying is changing and becoming less about cheap impressions.

Forrester forecasts that open exchange buying which is often associated with obscure inventory sources auctioning off ad placements will represent less than 20 percent of programmatic ad spending in the United States by 2021, down from 65 percent in 2015.

Additionally, big brands are recognizing programmatic's potential beyond direct response to strategically target consumers along the entire path to purchase.

Marketers who look beyond driving clicks also recognize programmatic's potential to drive branding by measuring cross-device attribution to understand how mobile exposure is impacting sales.

Marketers can also use programmatic for targeting without shrinking scale.

Cross-channel storytelling

Programmatic buying is a great fit for branding because of how marketers increasingly need to deploy messaging as consumers move through various channels.

For example, Refinery29 sequenced ads to get better results. Prospects were first served an ad designed to build brand awareness, then one focused on product awareness and, finally, one with a call to action. The result was 87 percent more site visits and 56 percent more subscriptions than a group shown only ads with a call to action.

Marketers can also use programmatic technologies such as DMPs and DSPs to gain insights into consumers so they can deliver personalized messages in the right channel, at the right moment and in the right context. With consumers bombarded with ads and increasingly embracing ad blockers, such personalization is becoming a must-have.

The data provided by programmatic buying can also help marketers build creative that is most likely to elicit an emotional response and to optimize creative as a campaign rolls out. Previously, branding creative was much more an art than a science.

Reconsidering metrics

Marketers who are serious about using programmatic for branding will need to reconsider the metrics they measure. Last-click attribution and conversion metrics are not relevant for branding campaigns while traditional methods for measuring brand health are insufficient to follow the pace of programmatic campaigns.

Forrester recommends measurement tie back to the overall long-term and short-term marketing objectives of a campaign. This should include branded studies to measure impact on brand health.

Additionally, real-time indicators of campaign success are needed. For example, Nestle measured brand awareness using indicators such as new audience reach, view ability and traffic to the Web site, particularly new unique visitors.

To fully understand the impact of branding campaigns on sales, marketers need to look beyond sales lift and conversion metrics to advanced techniques such as unified marketing impact analytics for linking online and offline sales to marketing activities.

"To match consumer behavior, marketers need to orchestrate and sequence messaging as consumers move through various channels and along their purchase path, rather than hammer them with a static proposition," Ms. Merlivat said.