

IAB EUROPE'S ATTITUDES TO PROGRAMMATIC ADVERTISING REPORT



iabeurope.eu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

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In order to understand the status of programmatic adoption across Europe on both the buyside and sell-side of the digital advertising industry, IAB Europe's Programmatic Trading Committee developed the Attitudes to Programmatic Advertising survey in <u>2015</u>.

Now in its tenth year, the study has become an industry benchmark to show how programmatic advertising attitudes, adoption and strategies are evolving across Europe. The study tracks the evolution of programmatic advertising attitudes, adoptions and strategies across Europe, and the issues and concerns that shape the years ahead. It also acts as an indicator to any areas where programmatic trading requires improvement be it cost or operational elements, enabling IAB Europe members to address these quickly and effectively, before it becomes a large-scale barrier to future investments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The survey asked about the following areas:

- How much programmatic is used for different formats (display, mobile and video)
- Drivers and barriers to programmatic investment
- Operational models used for programmatic
- Measurement and data strategy
- The importance of sustainability in programmatic trading
- The future of programmatic investment
- The future beyond the third-party cookie and the industry's readiness for the new addressability era

The report, written by industry experts from IAB Europe's membership, forms part of a comprehensive programme of pan-European educational and guidance outputs published by the <u>IAB Europe</u> <u>Programmatic Trading Committee</u>. Contributors are featured and thanked at the end of this report!



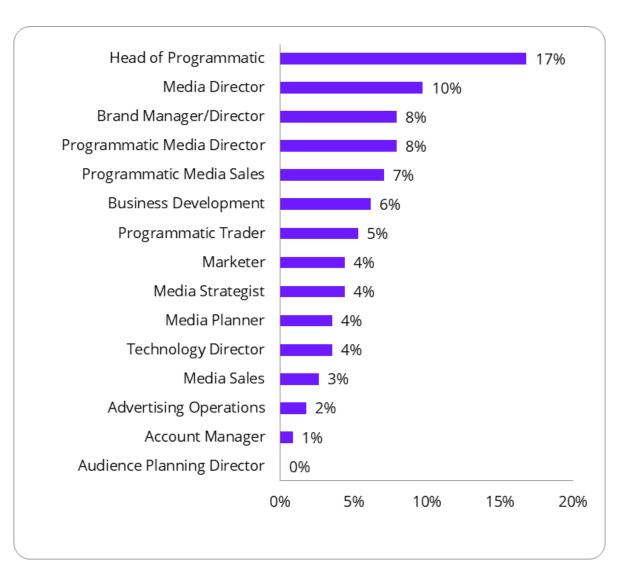
METHODOLOGY

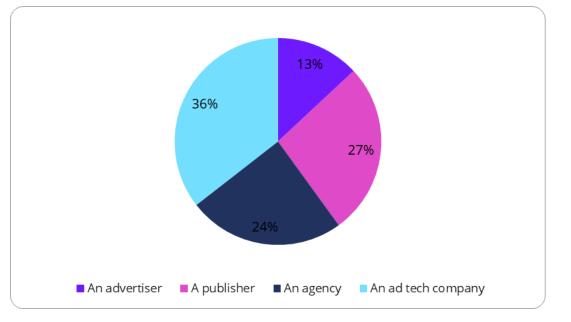
An online survey was sent out via email to IAB Europe members and the wider industry. With the additional help of the National IAB network, operating in over 29 European countries, it helped to ensure a representative sample across European markets.

The survey received 254 respondents between July and August 2024. The responses came from advertisers, agencies, publishers and ad tech vendors in 31 markets, with respondents having both pan-European and Global remits. The majority of respondents were heads of programmatic or media buying specialists. Just under half of all respondents represent buy-side stakeholders (13% advertisers; 24% agencies) and the majority have been working in digital advertising for 6 years plus.



METHODOLOGY - RESPONDENT PROFILE





Q. Is your company?



Q. Which of the following best describes your job role?

CURRENT ADOPTION AND STRATEGIES

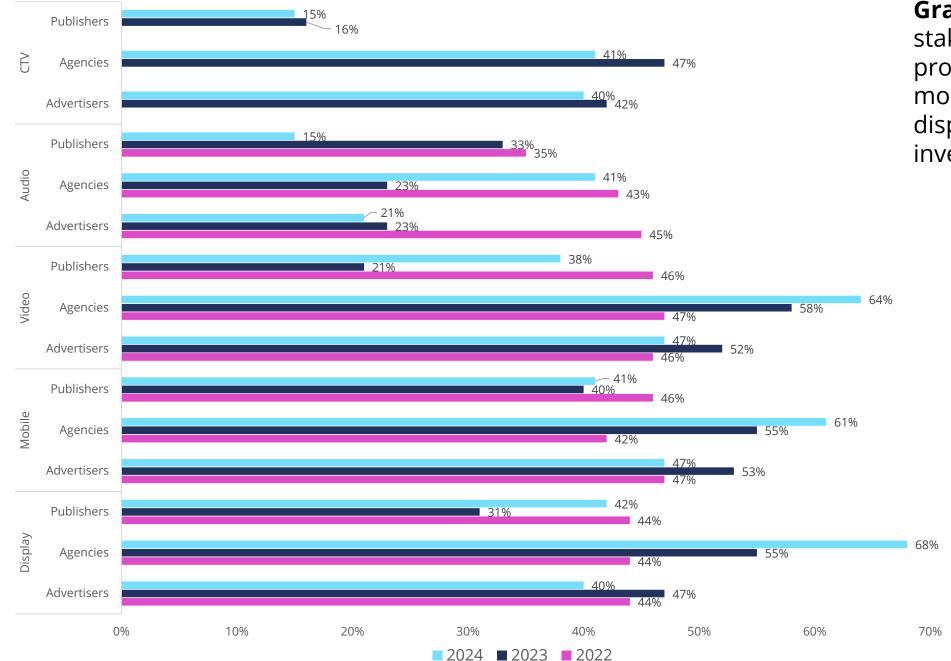


According to the recently released <u>AdEx Benchmark 2023 study</u> (published June 2024), the European digital ad market, valued at €96.6 billion Euros, continues to be programmatic first with just over half (51.9%) of all non-social display spend now being transacted programmatically. Whilst programmatic display advertising remains dominant, growth in this segment is maturing as budgets shift towards new channels like CTV and Retail Media. This shift is also influenced by changes in user behaviour, e.g. viewing habits, privacy concerns and the impending phase-out of third-party cookies, pushing the industry to explore alternative solutions.

This year's report echoes much of the 2023 AdEx data. When the buy side respondents were asked how much of their display campaigns were bought programmatically in 2024, we see the similar growth levels.

The industry is beginning to show signs of maturity, highlighting a clear contrast between advertisers and agencies.





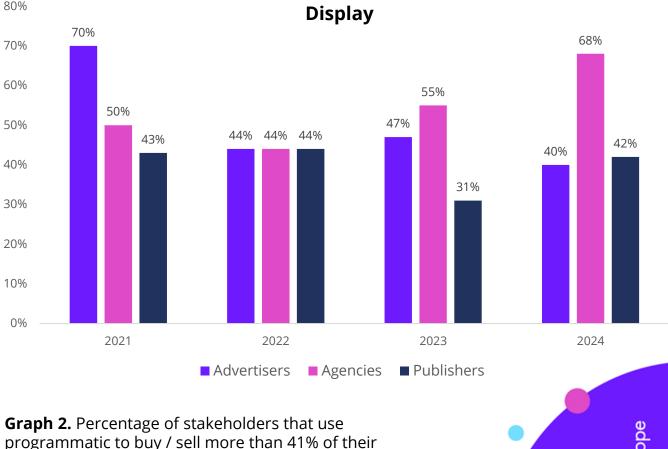
Graph 1. Percentage of stakeholders that use programmatic to buy / sell more than 41% of their display, mobile video inventory

80%

Display

In 2023, 47% of advertisers reported that over 41% of their display campaigns were purchased programmatically, a significant shift away from manual buying. In 2024, that percentage has decreased to 40%, bringing programmatic display investment levels back to what we saw in 2022, where 44% of advertisers bought more than 41% of their display programmatically. Despite this dip, display advertising still commands a strong programmatic investment, with 27% of advertisers are allocated programmatically.

On the agency side, the story is quite different. Last year, many agencies reported buying 41% of their display programmatically. This year, that figure has jumped to 68%, meaning that now, over half of all display budgets on the agency-side are purchased programmatically.



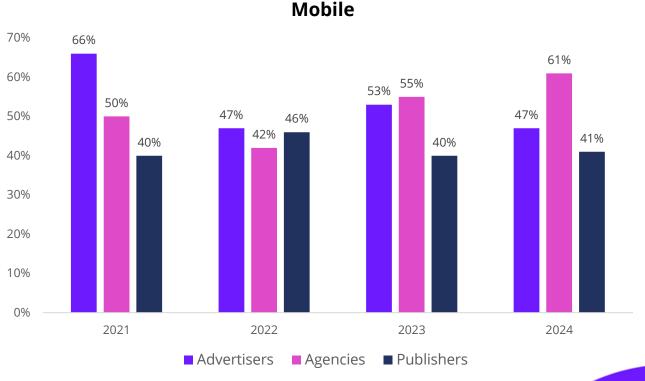
display campaigns

Mobile

The situation is similar for mobile campaigns. When asked about the percentage they invest in mobile programmatically, last year, 53% of advertisers and 55% of agencies said that 41%+ of their mobile investments was programmatic.

In 2024, as with display, there is a drop in investment levels for advertisers to 47% but an increase in agency investment to 61%.

The data also reveals that 1 in 5 advertisers and 1 in 3 agency buyers are investing 80% plus of their mobile media spend programmatically.

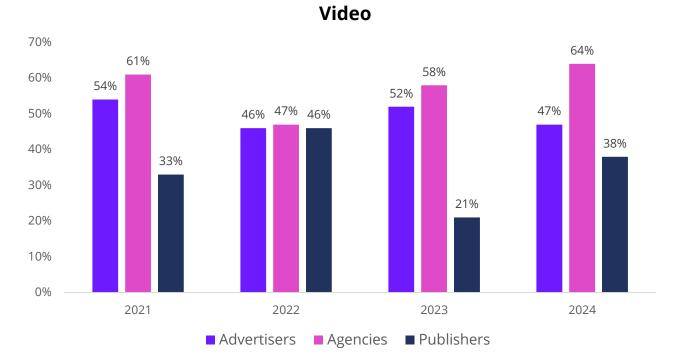


Graph 3. Percentage of stakeholders that use programmatic to buy / sell more than 41% of their mobile campaigns



Video

For video, 47% advertisers and 64% agencies cited that over 41% of their video investment was bought programmatically, compared to 53% of advertisers and 58% of agencies in 2023. As with display and mobile, again it is around a third of the buy side that said that 81%+ of their video investment is bought programmatically, highlighting the dependence of programmatic for the buy side.

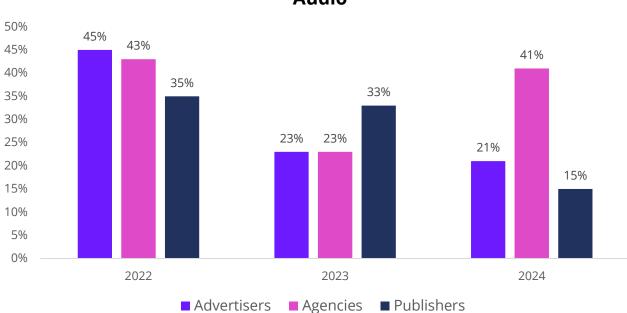


Graph 4. Percentage of stakeholders that use programmatic to buy / sell more than 41% of their video campaigns



Audio

With audio, 21% advertisers said that over 41% of their audio investment was bought programmatically but 35% are still buying 41% or more directly / traditionally. 41% of agencies said that 41% or more of their audio investment was bought programmatically. Of this, 33% of agencies said they were buying 81% + programmatically.



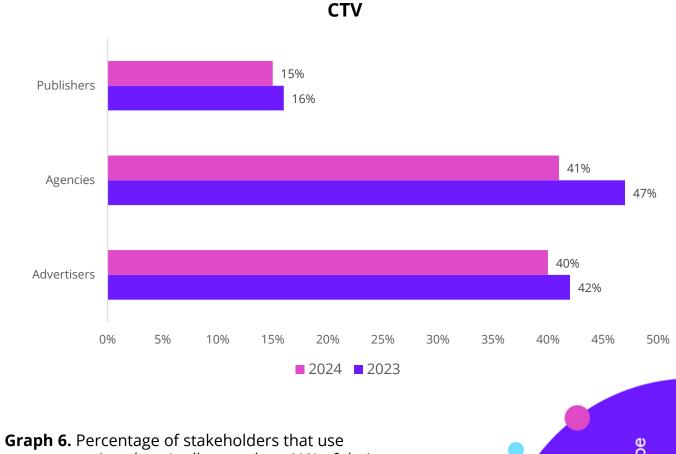
Audio

Graph 5. Percentage of stakeholders that use programmatic to buy / sell more than 41% of their audio campaigns



CTV

CTV is gaining more investment via programmatic channels in 2024 for both advertisers and agencies. 40% of advertisers said 41%+ of their CTV investment was bought programmatically, with 1/5th citing it was 81%+ more. 41% of agency respondents said that they bought 41%+ programmatically with 30% citing it was 81%+.



Graph 6. Percentage of stakeholders that use programmatic to buy / sell more than 41% of their CTV campaigns

OPERATIONAL MODELS



ADVERTISER OPERATIONAL MODEL

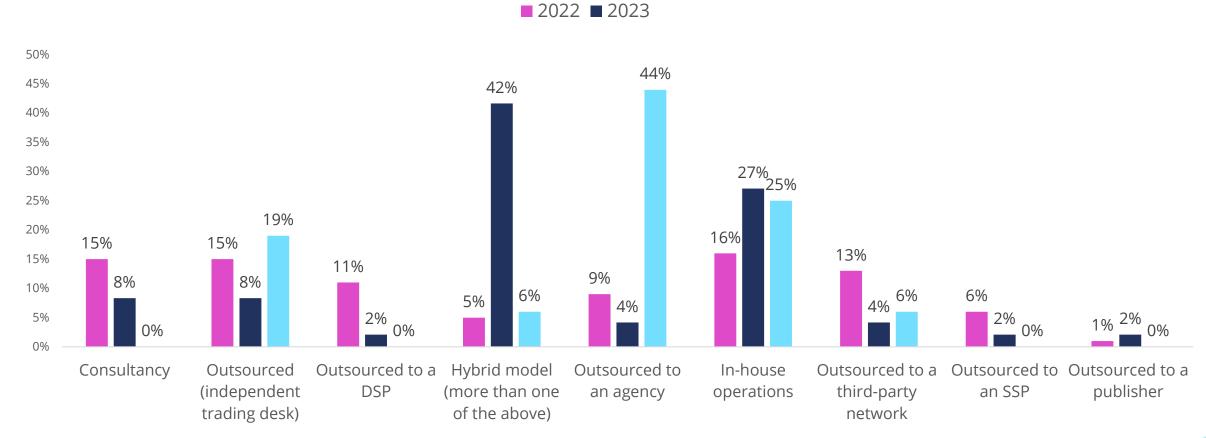
Operational models for the buy side have seen some experimentation over the last few years. In 2024, the majority (44%) of advertiser respondents cited outsourcing to an agency as their main operational model. However, In 2021, 50% of advertisers said that in-house was their main operational model. This dropped down to 16% in 2022 but bounced back up to 27% last year. This year, 25% of advertisers cited in-house as their main operational model. When asked what the key driver for having in-house operations was, 50% of respondents cited cost efficiencies. We see a clear trend towards in-housing and hybrid models, where agencies and advertiser teams work together.

Looking towards 2025, 42% of advertisers said they were considering bringing programmatic trading in-house over the next 12 months. Those respondents said they are considering using an external consultancy for their programmatic strategy in the next 12 months.

For those who responded affirmatively to the question "when thinking about bringing programmatic trading inhouse, does your company have sufficient budget to invest in programmatic advertising technologies and staff resources?" 80% of the respondents said yes. All respondents answered yes to using an external consultant for their programmatic strategy if they did.



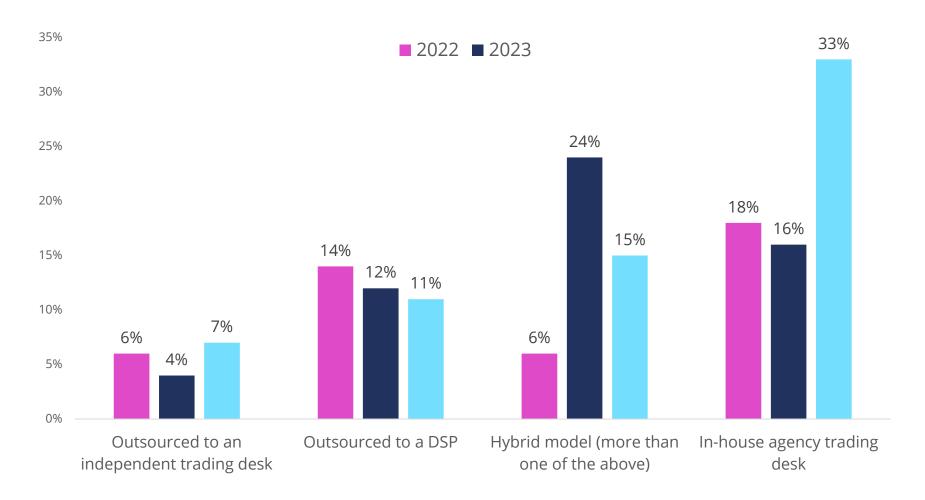
ADVERTISER OPERATIONAL MODEL



Graph 7 What operational model do you currently have in place for executing programmatic buying? (advertiser respondents)



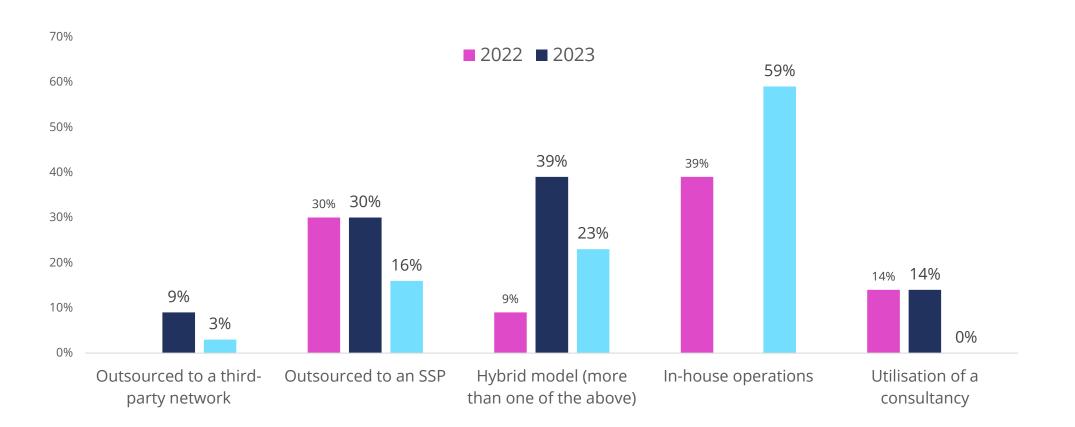
AGENCY OPERATIONAL MODEL



Graph 8 What operational model do you currently have in place for executing programmatic buying? (agency respondents)



PUBLISHER OPERATIONAL MODEL



Graph 9 What operational model do you currently have in place for executing programmatic buying? (agency respondents)



DRIVERS AND BARRIERS TO PROGRAMMATIC INVESTMENT



DRIVERS TO PROGRAMMATIC INVESTMENT

As operational efficiencies for programmatic have been realised, the buy side have turned their interest towards the audience and reporting capabilities of programmatic this year.

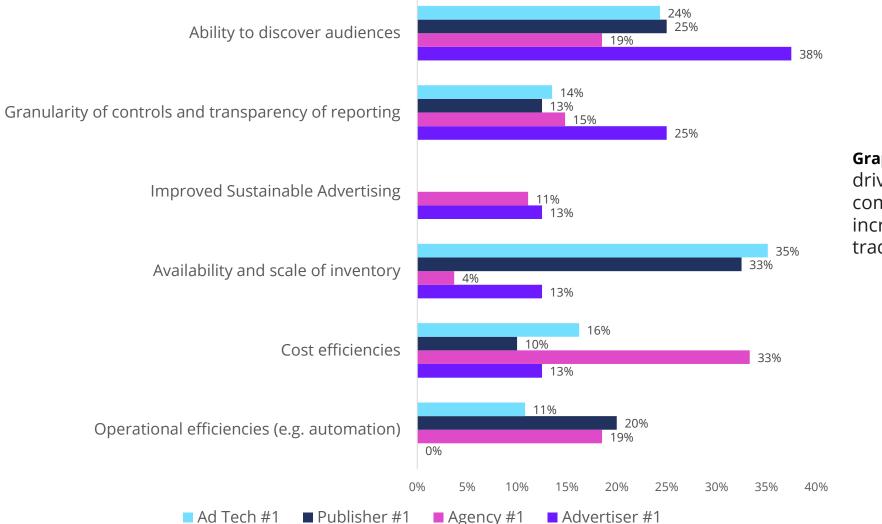
In 2024, the key driver for advertisers to consider investing / increasing their investment in programmatic advertising was the ability to discover audiences, followed by the granularity of controls and transparency of reporting. This is quite a shift from last year when advertisers ranked operational efficiencies as their main driver.

As with last year, agencies continue to rank cost efficiency as their number one driver for programmatic investment. They also rank the ability to discover audiences highly, with 19% selecting this as their number one choice. Publishers, meanwhile, continue in 2024 to view operational efficiencies (e.g. automation) and the availability and scale of inventory as the top two key business impact factors worthy of investment. This was also the top two reasons in 2023. Ad Tech vendors also followed the same trends from 2023 placing considerable importance on the availability and scale of inventory and the ability to discover audiences.



2024 DRIVERS TO PROGRAMMATIC INVESTMENT

2024 Drivers by Stakeholder (ranked no.1)



Graph 10 What are the key drivers/business impacts for your company to consider investing in / increasing its programmatic trading investment?



BARRIERS TO PROGRAMMATIC INVESTMENT

As media quality concerns rise, the buy side's focus has shifted to ensuring brand safety and managing risks like fraud, with cookie deprecation adding further challenges this year.

Looking at the barriers to programmatic adoption it's interesting to see that whilst in 2022 the buy side positioned costs as their number one barrier, in 2023 there was a big shift towards reviewing the quality of media. Last year, approximately a third of advertisers cited the quality of media which includes fraud, brand safety etc, as their number one barrier.

In 2024, the biggest barrier to programmatic investment for all stakeholders was the quality of media. In 2023, this was cited as a top barrier for only advertisers with other stakeholder groups having more concerns over sustainability and the political and economic environment. This year, however, quality of media takes the top spot for all barriers for 31% of advertisers, 41% of agencies and 30% of publishers.

This is a clear sign that the industry needs to better educate the buy side on how they can ensure brand safe and trusted environments for their ad campaigns. It is also important that the industry better demonstrates responsible media practices, highlighting the quality controls that are in place for brands.



BARRIERS TO PROGRAMMATIC INVESTMENT

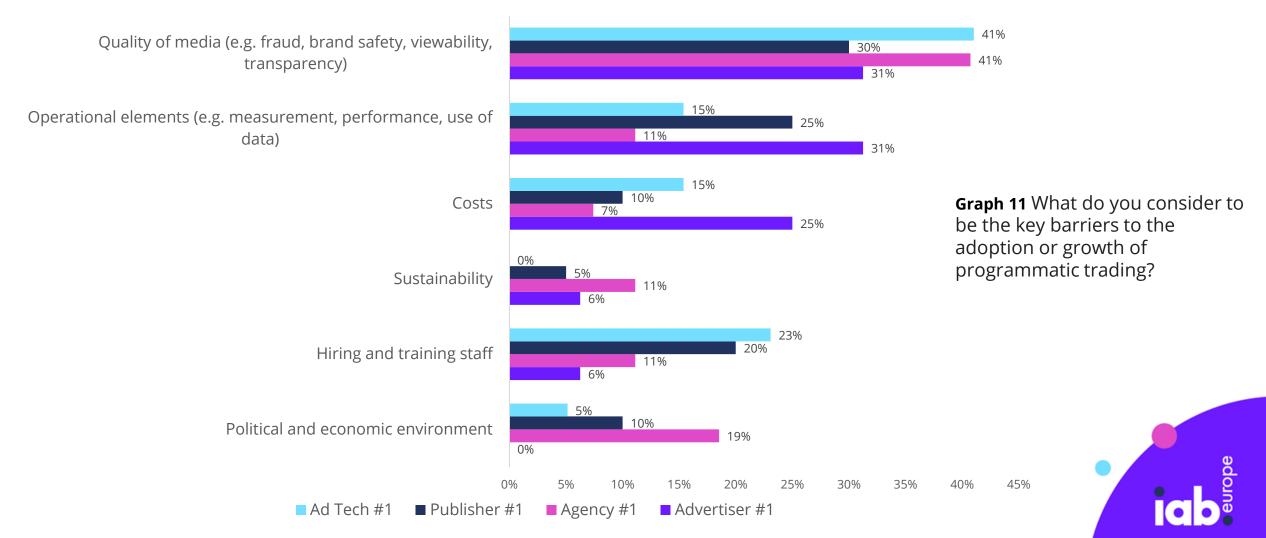
These trends can also be seen as the coalescence of MFA, fraud, brand safety and supply path optimisation leading to increased focus on curation of supply and demand partners.

Another barrier might be the decreased addressability of programmatic inventory through third-party cookie deprecation and the fact that over 50% of advertisers do not agree with the statement that their company is prepared for third-party cookie deprecation proceeding in Chrome browser. Supply-side curation is providing a growing industry solution here, with these platforms offering significantly increased scale for first-party data activation, and immediately available cookie-less and ID-less solutions.



BARRIERS TO PROGRAMMATIC INVESTMENT





BARRIERS TO PROGRAMMATIC INVESTMENT (2023-2024)

	Advertiser		Agency		Publisher	
	#1 2023	#1 2024	#1 2023	#1 2024	#1 2023	#1 2024
Costs	7%	25%	14%	7%	26%	10%
Operational elements (e.g. measurement, performance, use of data)	10%	31%	18%	11%	13%	25%
Hiring and training staff	3%	6%	11%	11%	15%	20%
Quality of media (e.g. fraud, brand safety, viewability, transparency)	35%	31%	21%	41%	15%	30%
Political and economic environment	19%	0%	11%	19%	28%	10%
Sustainability	15%	6%	25%	11%	3%	5%

Graph 12 What do you consider to be the key barriers to the adoption or growth of programmatic trading?



MEASUREMENT AND DATA STRATEGIES

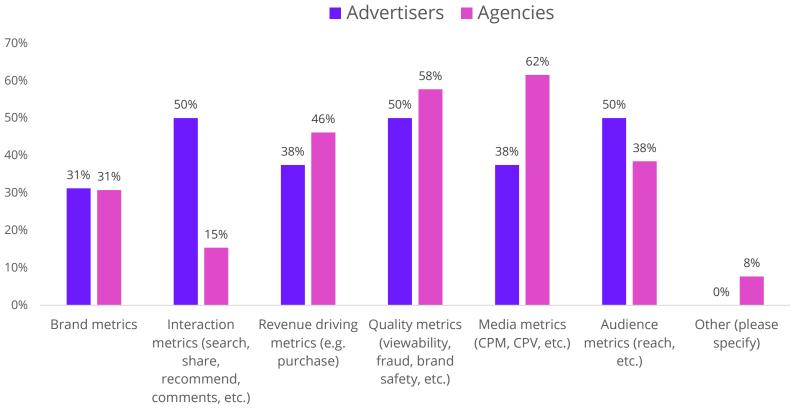


METRICS TO MEASURE PROGRAMMATIC PERFORMANCE

In a continuation of the uncertainty surfaced in the 2023 survey, the 2024 results highlight the industry's ongoing challenge navigating transformational changes in addressability and privacy.

In the measurement space for example, despite the popular narrative that as an industry we should be moving beyond some of the more traditional 'media metrics' (e.g. CPMs & CPVs), these remain the primary focus areas for agencies when evaluating the success of their programmatic campaigns.

This year's increased attention around quality is also highlighted in a significant YoY increase for both advertisers and agencies.



Graph 13 Which of the following metrics are important to evaluate your display campaigns that are traded programmatically?



ADVERTISERS FOCUS ON QUALITY & INTERACTION METRICS

In 2024, advertisers selected quality and interaction metrics as their most effective metrics to measure their programmatic campaigns.

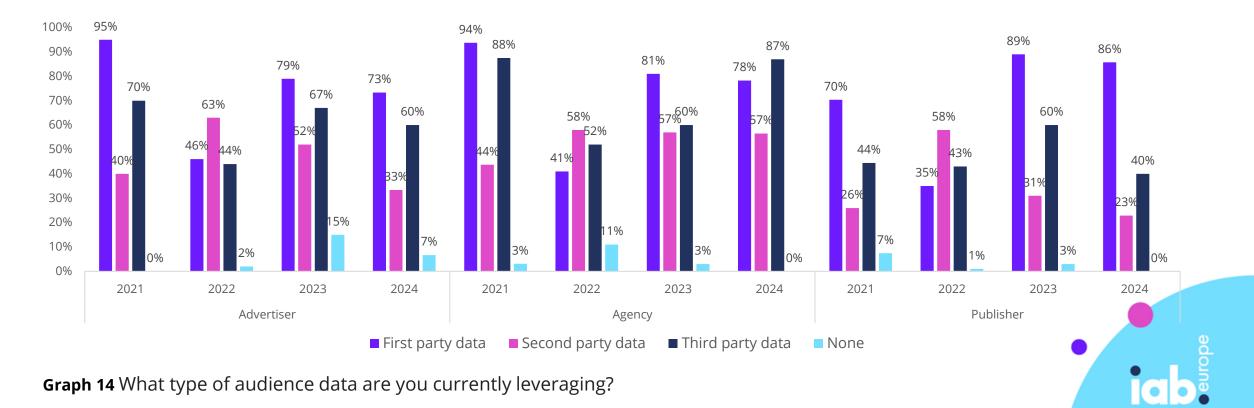
Quality continues as a key trend for advertisers in the context of a year where topics like MFA (Made for Advertising) content, third-party cookie removal, brand safety, attribution concerns, and regulation have all driven the industry conversation. Across each of these topics' strong measurement strategies with deeper insight consistently provides a powerful tool for informed decision making and strategic investment. The broader increase in focus on multiple measurement approaches may also reflect the continued expansion of more sophisticated buying in omni- and multi-channel environments.

In 2025 we also see a spike with advertisers in interaction metrics. This may indicate an increase and dependence on social buying as well as a core focus to better understand how well consumers are relating to the ad. This is also where we see the most-stark divide between agencies (16%) and advertisers (50%) identifying this category as important. Another interesting trend is a reversal where agencies express a slightly reduced focus on audience metrics such as reach, while advertisers are prioritising it at the same level of quality and interaction metrics.



FIRST & THIRD-PARTY AUDIENCE DATA USAGE INCREASES IN 2024

In 2022, 46% of advertisers reported leveraging first-party data, and 44% third-party data. That almost doubled in 2023 to 97% and 67% before arriving at 73% and 60% for 2024. A trend mirrored by agencies. These significant fluctuations may highlight both a maturation in understanding of the terminology and use cases surrounding different programmatic data types, as well as highlight a degree of experimentation as technological and regulatory considerations are explored.



THIRD-PARTY COOKIE RELIANCE

In 2024 the resurgent reliance on third-party data is also visible among technology providers where the trend has increased from 51% in 2022 to 27% in 2023, jumping back up to 60% in 2024. Only publishers have reported a significant drop from 60% to 40% between 2023 and 2024.

There are, however, clear signs that the industry is looking more to the future and this temporary reversal for third-party data is likely due to uncertainty in the market and not indicative of long-term staying power. Across the board advertisers, agencies, publishers and ad tech providers all resoundingly reported (80%+) plans to leverage first-party data in the future. While a slight divide surfaces in the future for use of third-party data with 53% of advertisers reporting the plan to use it in the future, while agencies, publishers and AdTech vendors all reported limited plans to use third-party data in the future (between 31-39%).

After last year's resurgent interest in contextual targeting, advertisers and agencies report a shift from looking to having settled on preferred replacement candidates for the third-party cookie. First-party identifiers and contextual targeting stand out as the dominant preference for both finding new audiences and replacing the third-party cookie.



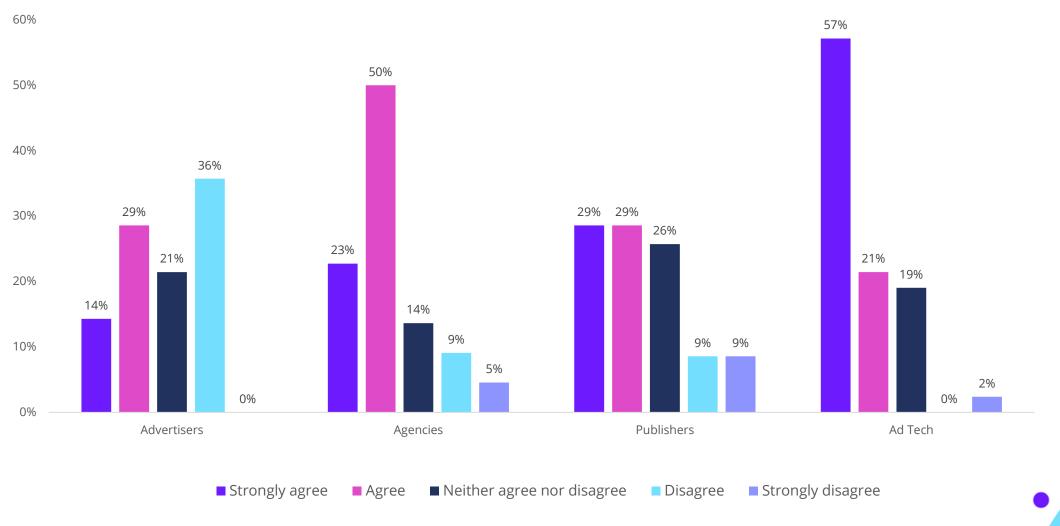
THIRD-PARTY COOKIE RELIANCE

There continues to be significant interest and curiosity about innovative technologies and where they add most value. 2024 continued to see rapid evolution in the role of the Measurement API / Privacy Sandbox. However, as understanding here is still nascent there remains some uncertainty on approach. Semantic data is also emerging as an area of innovation within contextual advertising. Moving beyond domains, sections and keywords with the use of machine learning to understand the deeper sentiment of content and match ads accordingly.

Overall readiness appears to be a mixed bag. With the removal of third-party cookies transitioning from a hard deadline to a more nuanced phase-out there are significant differences in a sense of readiness. While approximately 43% of advertisers and 73% of agencies agree or strongly agree that they're ready for post third-party solutions, just over 1 in 5 Ad Tech respondents reported being either neutral or unprepared while 79% agree or strongly agreed that they are prepared.

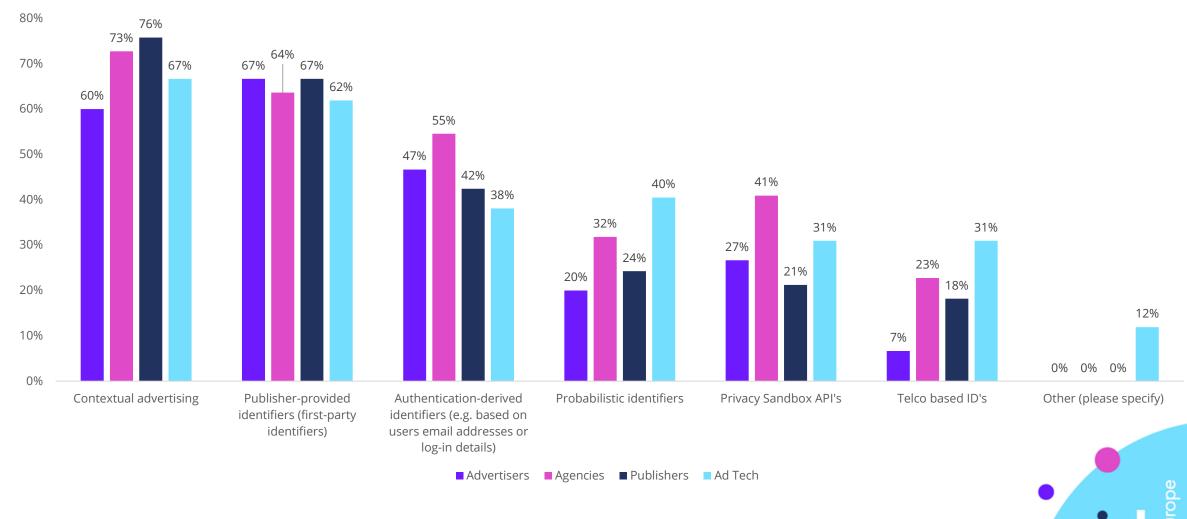
In summary, it seems that the market is starting to feel more confident in how to approach and effectively use a range of measurement and data strategies that blend new and old measurement and targeting technologies with a focus on future-proof paths. Reassuringly, only 9% of agency respondents feel their companies are not ready for depreciation, and only 4.5% strongly feel unready. The same confidence level can be seen in ad tech companies, whereas publishers and advertisers are still more uncertain of readiness.

INDUSTRY READINESS FOR THE NEW ADDRESSABILITY ERA



Graph 15 Overall, do you agree that you/your company is prepared for the deprecation of third-party cookies?

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS TO THIRD PARTY COOKIES



Graph 15 Which alternatives to third-party cookies are you evaluating for the future? (Please select all that apply)

THE FUTURE OF PROGRAMMATIC



THE TRIFECTA: AI, RETAIL MEDIA, AND CTV SET TO DRIVE PROGRAMMATIC GROWTH

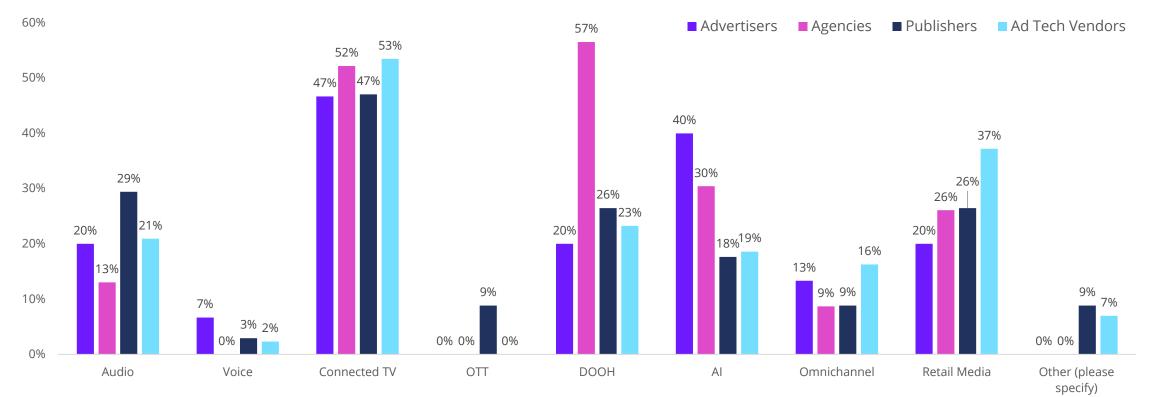
When respondents were asked what they thought would be the key programmatic growth areas over the next 12 months, 36% of advertisers and 29% of agencies cited AI as being the number one contributor to future programmatic growth.

Publishers selected Audio and Retail Media as their top two growth areas for programmatic growth. The confidence in Retail Media fuelling new investment opportunities was most strongly backed by ad tech vendors with 43% selecting it as the number one driver.

Connected TV was the one consistent driver for all stakeholder groups. Around one third of each stakeholder group selected it as the key growth area.



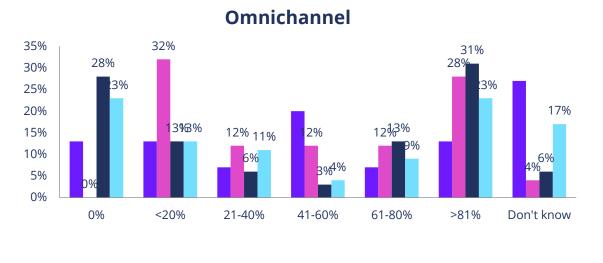
INDUSTRY PREDICTIONS ON FUTURE PROGRAMMATIC GROWTH AREAS



Graph 16 What do you think will be the key programmatic growth areas over the next 12 months?

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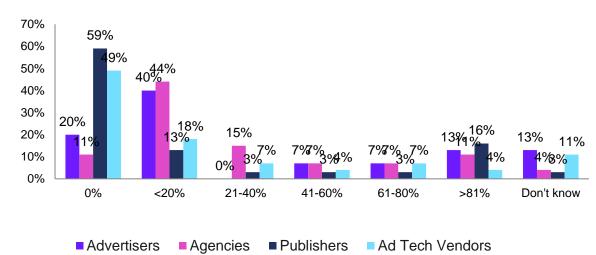
INVESTMENT IN EMERGING CHANNELS



Advertisers Agencies Publishers Ad Tech Vendors

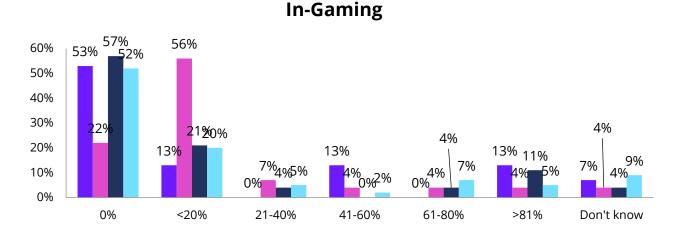
Graph 17 What percentage of your programmatic trading budget is invested the following emerging channel? (Omnichannel)

Graph 18 What percentage of your programmatic trading budget is invested the following emerging channel? (DOOH)



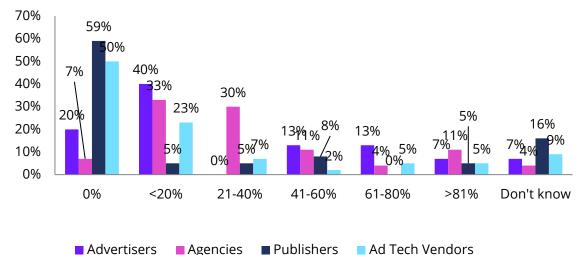
DOOH

INVESTMENT IN EMERGING CHANNELS



Advertisers Agencies Publishers Ad Tech Vendors

Retail Media



Graph 19 What percentage of your programmatic trading budget is invested the following emerging channel? (Ingaming)

Graph 20 What percentage of your programmatic trading budget is invested the following emerging channel? (Retail Media)



SUSTAINABILITY & PROGRAMMATIC ADVERTISING

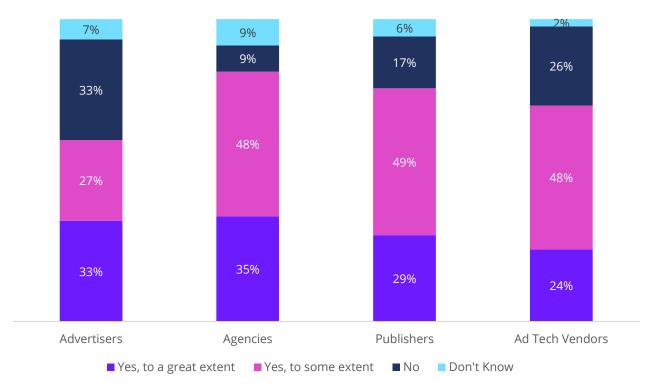


IS SUSTAINABILITY A STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR THE INDUSTRY?

120%

As shown in the 2024 barriers to programmatic investment, sustainability is no longer a major concern for Advertisers and Agencies. Is it still a strategic focus for their organisation?

We started to gauge the impact of 60% sustainability in the context of programmatic trading last year, with a majority of 40% respondents (over 80%) confirming that achieving sustainable programmatic advertising was a strategic focus for their 20% organisation. This is still the case this year, although we've seen a major shift, becoming 0% more important for agencies (81%, 10 points gain versus 2023) than for advertisers (60%, 20 points decrease versus 2023); For Publishers and Ad Tech, the overall percentage is the same, although it has moved up the ranking and it is seen as more of a strategic focus than previously.



Graph 21 Is achieving sustainable programmatic advertising a strategic focus for your organisation?



PROGRESS TOWARDS NET ZERO

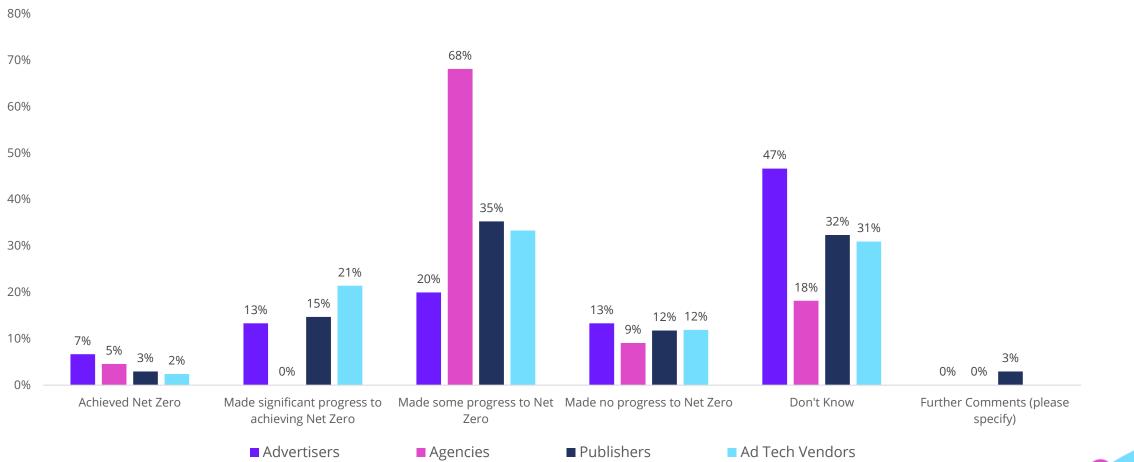
When it comes to progress made by programmatic partners toward <u>Ad Net Zero</u> (ANZ), here again answers are very different compared to last year.

There is a rather abyssal divide between agencies and advertisers. Almost 70% of agencies agree that some progress has been made towards ANZ, only 20% of advertisers share this view. For a majority (47%) of them there is uncertainty around what progress has been made. On the other hand, publishers and ad tech vendors are split, with 50% and 55% respectively saying that some or significant progress has been made, while 32% and 31% are unsure.

As sustainability work and standards are evolving, it's becoming less clear on the definable progress, and as people enter multi-year sustainability journeys, the process is harder to track. An advertiser's view of progress on sustainability will be across a wider range of inputs, versus simply the media part of the funnel. After initial progress and relatively easy initial steps, more complex and detailed progress is underway.



PROGRESS TOWARDS NET ZERO



Graph 22 How much progress do you think your programmatic partners have made in sustainability over the past 12 months?



SUMMARY

enrope

SUMMARY

The 2024 IAB Europe *Attitudes to Programmatic Report* highlights the latest trends in programmatic advertising across Europe, reflecting a decade of evolution. This year's findings reveal an increasingly mature market, where nuanced shifts in investment patterns, operational preferences, and challenges define programmatic trading on both the buy-side and sell-side.

In 2024, programmatic investment is solidifying, though patterns vary between advertisers and agencies, indicating market maturation. Display ad investments show a slight decline among advertisers, while agencies are increasing their programmatic spend, particularly in mobile and video formats. Agency investments also outpace advertisers in these areas, with the rise of Connected TV (CTV) further underscoring demand for programmatic in emerging media. Al and Retail Media Networks are highlighted as growth drivers, with Al playing a crucial role in optimising audience discovery and targeting.





SUMMARY

Audience discovery and reporting transparency now lead as top drivers for programmatic investment among advertisers, replacing last year's focus on operational efficiency. Agencies prioritise cost efficiency, closely followed by audience targeting. Quality concerns – including brand safety and media reliability – are now the primary barriers to investment, with over 30% of buy-side respondents identifying media quality as a major challenge, underscoring the need for stronger industry standards in brand safety, fraud prevention, and trustworthiness.

The report also underscores a shift in data use and measurement priorities. Advertisers are increasingly focusing on first-party data, while reliance on third-party data is waning under privacy and regulatory pressures. Readiness for a post-third-party cookie environment remains mixed, with fewer than half of advertisers feeling prepared. As contextual targeting and first-party identifiers gain traction, there is growing demand for more sophisticated audience metrics to address measurement challenges in this transitional period.

Sustainability, while still strategically relevant, has taken a back seat amid economic pressures. Over 80% of agencies consider it a priority, though only 60% of advertisers agree, marking a 20% decrease from last year. Looking ahead, the programmatic landscape is set for continued growth in CTV, Retail Media, and Al-driven personalisation. While optimism is high, industry sentiment remains tempered by caution, with a strong focus on first-party data, enhanced audience discovery, and quality assurance as programmatic advertising adapts to a privacy-first, post-cookie era.



INDUSTRY COMMENTARY

"Looking towards 2025, curation technology harnessing data science, specifically machine learning and AI, will continue its positive impact on programmatic advertising efficiency. Curation platforms are also incorporating carbon measurement partners aligned to the Ad Net Zero GMSF (Global Media Sustainability Framework), to enable sharing of campaign carbon measurement. This increased industry transparency and consistency is expected to provide practical support for advertisers and their procurement teams who wish to include these results in their overall carbon measurement"

Keith Arrowsmith Marketing Director, Onetag

"As we approach the midpoint of the decade in 2024, programmatic investments continue to grow, with CTV now commanding the greatest rise. Interestingly, this is taking place on a backdrop of a formidable barrier, as identified by all stakeholders, which remains the quality of media. Despite advancements in technology and data analytics, concerns surrounding brand safety, ad fraud, and viewability persist, impeding the confidence of advertisers. To overcome this hurdle, the industry must continue to prioritize transparency and the enforcement of stricter quality standards.

On another note, it's encouraging to see that, compared to last year, environmental sustainability is less of a barrier to programmatic investments and continues to be a focus for all media players. There is a lot of great work being done and initiatives, such as the IAB Europe's sustainability committees and working groups, and we should continue to engage in constructive dialogues and action plans, making sustainability a seamless part of our programmatic ecosystem. This willingness to make progress, despite challenges, will ultimately lead to a more sustainable future for all".

Emmanuel Josserand, Sr Dir, Brand, Agency and Industry Relations, FreeWheel





INDUSTRY COMMENTARY

"The rise of Connected TV is transforming the programmatic advertising landscape. With an increasing number of viewers opting for streaming platforms, we're seeing a major change in how advertisers connect with their audiences. As we continue to innovate in this space, leveraging programmatic solutions will be key to unlocking the full potential of CTV, driving both engagement and performance for the industry at large."

Cadi Jones, SVP, Europe, Index Exchange.



"This year's findings highlight an industry mid-evolution, driving forward in areas such as CTV and Retail Media while increasingly prioritising data integrity and transparent measurement. The development of a new attribution model marks an essential step toward a resilient omnichannel framework. A clear pivot to first-party data means a future less reliant on third-party cookies and outdated tech. Confidence is growing in solutions to elevate data-driven strategies, as we prepare more fully for a multi-ID environment. As the industry innovates around modernized media buying, these advancements will be critical for making informed decisions, particularly amid AI's transformative impact on digital advertising."

Alex Berger, Senior Product Marketing Director, Adform





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THANK YOU

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