



Smart Curation for the Open Internet

In association with



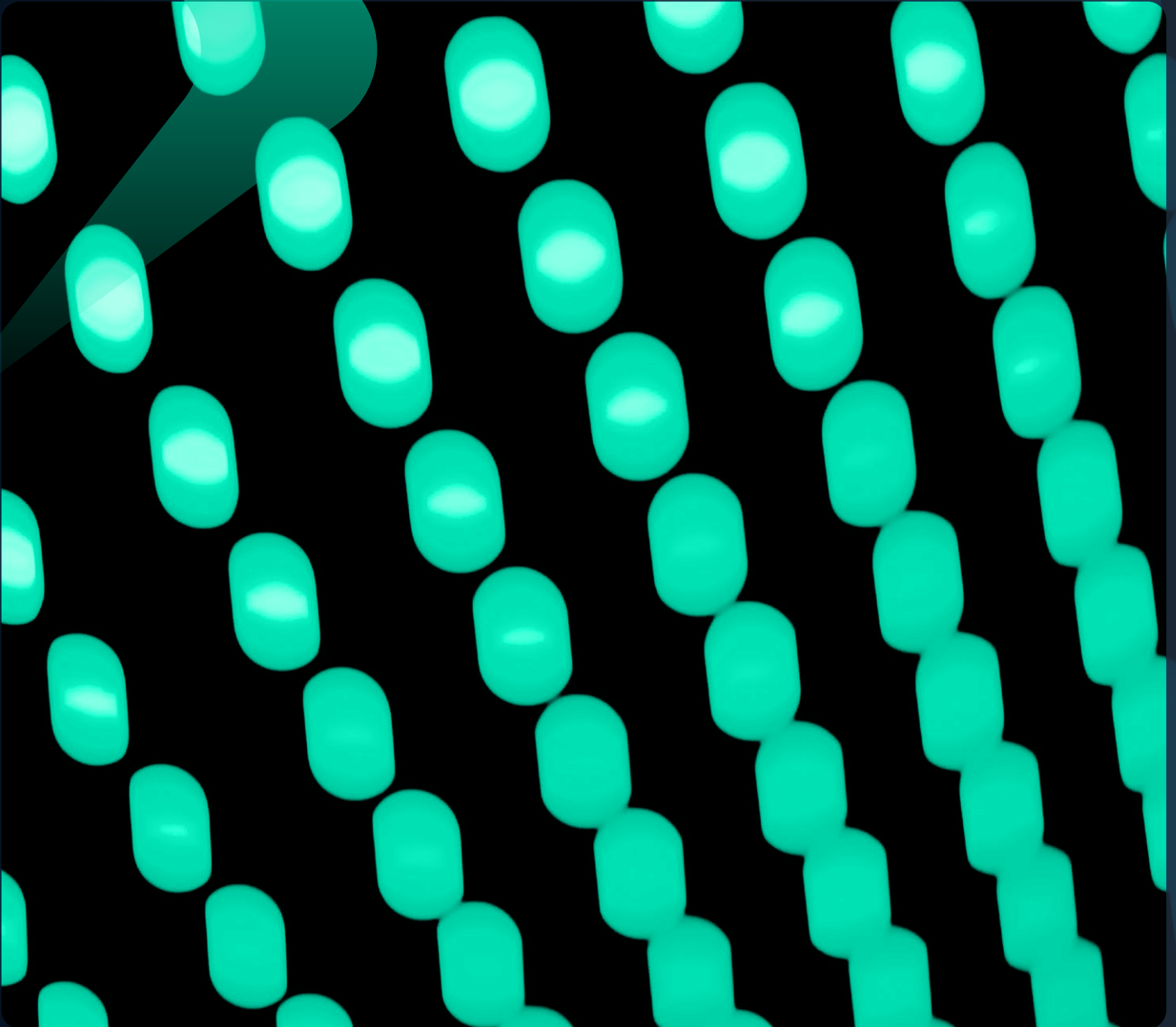
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Section 01

Smart Curation: Empowering the Open Web



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Curation: the ad tech world won't stop talking about it, and many are turning their advertising efforts towards it. Some believe it has the potential to become a one-size-fits-all solution. But many are also still finding their feet, as they question the mechanics behind curation, and how exactly it can benefit them. It's a hot topic, one that many want to discuss and become part of — but the industry still needs to look beyond the buzz to really understand what curation means and how to do it well.

In this ExchangeWire Deep Dive in association with Onetag, we'll look at what exactly curation is, what the benefits are and how the industry can harness curation solutions to drive a better quality, more sustainable ecosystem for both advertisers and consumers.



Looking ahead, the focus on sustainability, transparency, and the delayed deprecation of third-party cookies creates a fertile ground for media curation. With increased emphasis on responsible advertising practices, curated partnerships with eco-conscious and transparent media will be crucial, and it's very much what we're focusing on over the next 12 months and beyond."

Miglena Dimitrova

Head of Performance, the7stars

TOP 10 RULES FOR SMART CURATION



1) Embrace the Cookieless Future:
Adapt to new standards with a blended approach for better targeting without cookies.



2) Cut the Waste:
Use smart curation technology to eliminate ad waste, saving costs and promoting sustainability.



3) Drive Efficiency:
Use smart AI and machine learning curation to save significant time and increase the efficiency of your programmatic planning and activation.



4) Champion Transparency:
Ensure clear and honest media planning and buying for trustworthy campaigns.



5) Use Premium Data:
Apply top-tier data and insights in supply-side deal creation to achieve significantly higher user match rates and audience scale for campaigns.



6) Unlock the Open Web:
Use smart curation technology to manage the breadth of the open web safely and successfully. Unlock overlooked high-quality audiences and avoid low media quality impressions wherever these appear.



7) Predictive Planning:
Utilise predictive audience data to plan more effective campaigns.



8) Semantic Targeting:
Go beyond keywords with advanced targeting of web content to boost reach, relevance, attention and performance metrics for campaigns.



9) Real-time Decisioning:
Use curation's real-time dynamic measurement and optimisation to make immediate decisions for the best campaign results.



10) Form Strong Partnerships:
Collaborate across the industry to enhance your market position.

WHAT EXACTLY IS CURATION?

In the most simple terms, curation gives users direct access to supply side-inventory, applying programmatic technology to create and manage the buying and selling of ads. The programmatic tool provides both advertisers and publishers with a more efficient way of carrying out the ad buying/selling process. The process of curation allows brands, retailers, publishers and data providers to combine their first-party data with inventory sourced from third-party publishers within PMPs, which can then be delivered to demand-side platforms (DSPs) as easy-to-activate Deal IDs.

At their core, curation platforms serve the primary purpose of acting as self-service suites. Curators using such platforms are able to create refined auction packages tailored to specific business rules, using curation features such as filtering inventory based on location, or building audiences with contextual targeting aligned with performance KPIs.

Smart Curation — The Benefits

Smart curation is AI-powered, cookieless, and privacy centric. For advertisers, it delivers improved scale, performance, and measurement, as well as giving way to greater control and flexibility. It allows increased transparency across the entire supply chain, giving those using curation platforms confidence to transact within a brand-safe environment.

AI-powered smart curation also makes the Open Internet work safely and effectively at scale. It removes low quality ad placement wastage at the source, then algorithmically curates high media quality media impressions across the premium open web. This advanced traffic shaping provides advertisers with additional scale for campaigns, and access to fresh audiences versus the restriction of manually applied domain lists.

Curation facilitates more efficient bidding — better user matching for greater scale, and faster outcomes without having to contend with deal throttling. Control for advertisers is increased through the ability to immediately apply and manage unique campaign targeting directly at the source of supply. This leads to improved campaign execution and measurement with a clear path from advertiser to inventory, reducing intermediaries and providing the surety that the right contexts and audiences are being delivered.

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Data providers use curation to achieve significantly higher match rates for their segments at the source of supply, compared with the traditional approach of activating this on the demand side in DSPs via DMPs. This increased addressability leads to higher campaign engagement for data-based Deal IDs pushed from curation platforms to DSPs. The benefits are also quite extensive for publishers: curation acts as an updated, privacy-conscious approach for first-party data monetisation and offers new revenue streams as curation accelerates on the demand side. It also offers them a respite for the reality of inventory commoditisation, as well as producing a heightened demand.

Using AI in a Cookieless Environment

Despite Google's latest delay to its cookie deprecation timeline — the great cookie crumble is still approaching. Currently, there is no perfect solution to work around the loss of third-party cookies for advertising on the open web — but curation can form part of a blend approach to reach the requirements of a cookieless environment. Effectively, curation is future proof for the looming cookieless landscape.

AI, the hottest of hot button topics in the industry, has a pivotal role to play here. In a landscape where third-party cookies are vanishing, contextual advertising emerges as a privacy-conscious and brand-safe method for advertisers to collaborate with publishers in reaching targeted audiences within premium environments, tailored to individual preferences. Using AI to define these roles through curation can foster more effective and efficient advertising campaigns, ensuring heightened relevance and breadth. Curation offers a privacy-friendly, brand-safe avenue for engaging interested audiences within high-quality environments

The use of AI and machine learning here certainly garners results: [research from ExchangeWire](#) reveals that 87% of European marketers experienced enhanced return-on-investment (ROI) through AI implementation, with 80% reporting a reduction in advertising waste.

Efficiency = Sustainability

With the increased efficiency offered by curation, comes an elimination of waste in the digital advertising ecosystem. Curation, by its nature, serves to sift through and refine data, effectively minimising the volume of information processed by DSPs. This reduction in data not only enhances efficiency but also aligns with sustainability goals.

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Following the June 2024 release of GARM's (Global Alliance for Responsible Media) new Global Media Sustainability Framework, curation platforms that integrate carbon measurement will be able to clearly quantify and demonstrate the significant sustainability benefits of this approach for the programmatic supply chain. Smart curation can be incorporated within brands, agencies and DSPs as a core element of their corporate sustainability strategy, driving down emissions for programmatic advertising and providing comprehensive measurement.

Filippo Gramigna, the Chief Operating Officer of Onetag, underscores the pivotal role of sustainability in the open web's supply chain:


“Ensuring sustainability for the open web supply chain is hugely important. The good news is AI-driven programmatic advertising technology directly helps this approach, as a result of its efficiency in reducing wastage and then optimising better performing impressions for the buy-side. Supply-side curation also enables better matching versus this being done on the buy-side. All this new efficiency can reduce the QPS for DSPs, as they no longer have to work so hard to find the impressions that matter.

Curation platforms that integrate carbon measurement for compliance with the GARM Sustainability Framework will also accelerate emissions measurement and scoring for advertisers and their procurement teams.”

Empowering the Open Web

Speaking of the Open Web, debates run and run regarding brand safety, low quality inventory and the lack of control for buyers. Valid concerns, but ones that mean that advertisers risk missing out on a wealth of quality inventory and crucially, an engaged audience browsing in an arena tailored to their specific interests.

Curation is well-placed to alleviate the concerns and to unlock the overlooked yet high-quality aspects of the open web. Programmatic-driven curation can level the playing field, serving ads where they're most appreciated and most likely to convert — advertisers win, consumers win and smaller publishers win.



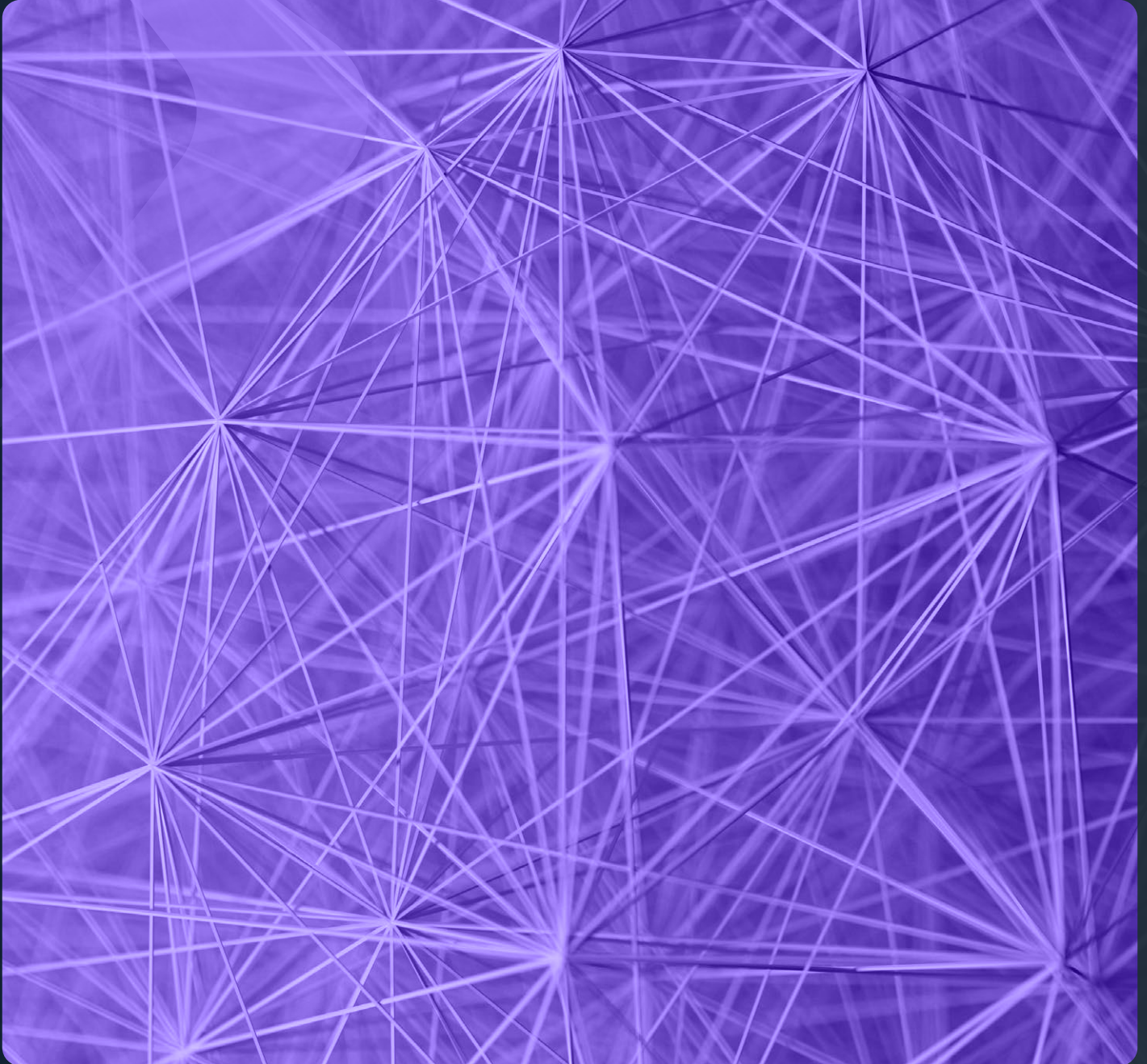
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Chief Operating Officer, Onetag

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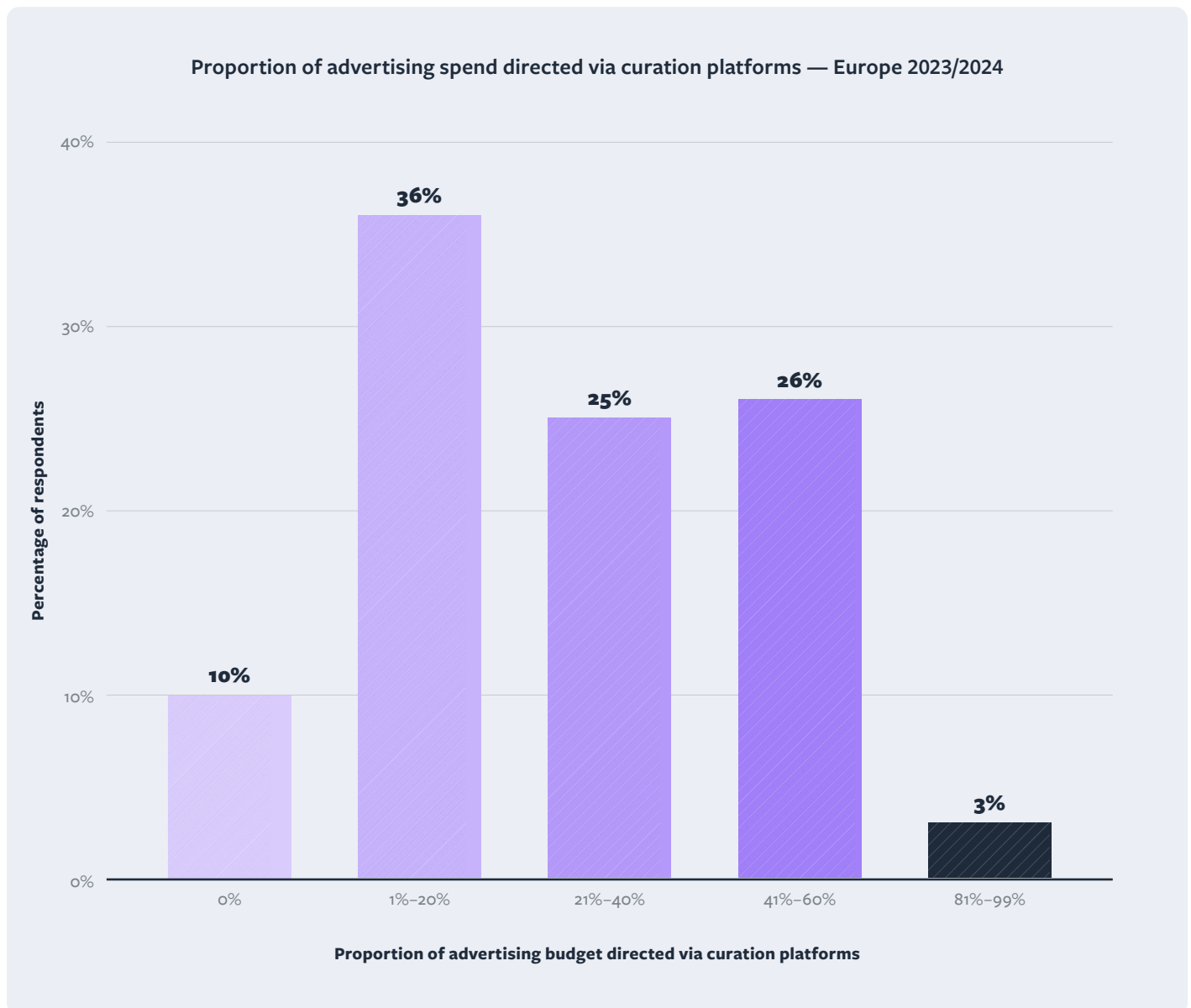
Applications of Curation



APPLICATIONS OF CURATION

With curation’s benefits ranging from increased sustainability to suiting the post-cookie landscape, many industry players are adopting the solution.

An [ExchangeWire research study](#) conducted in early 2024 investigated how European media buyers use curation: the data obtained demonstrated that agency and brand marketers across the region are heavily leaning into the field. Nine in ten surveyed respondents reported that at least some of their advertising spend was directed via curation platforms. Moreover, approximately three in ten professionals stated that at least 40% of their advertising spend is funnelled through curation platforms.

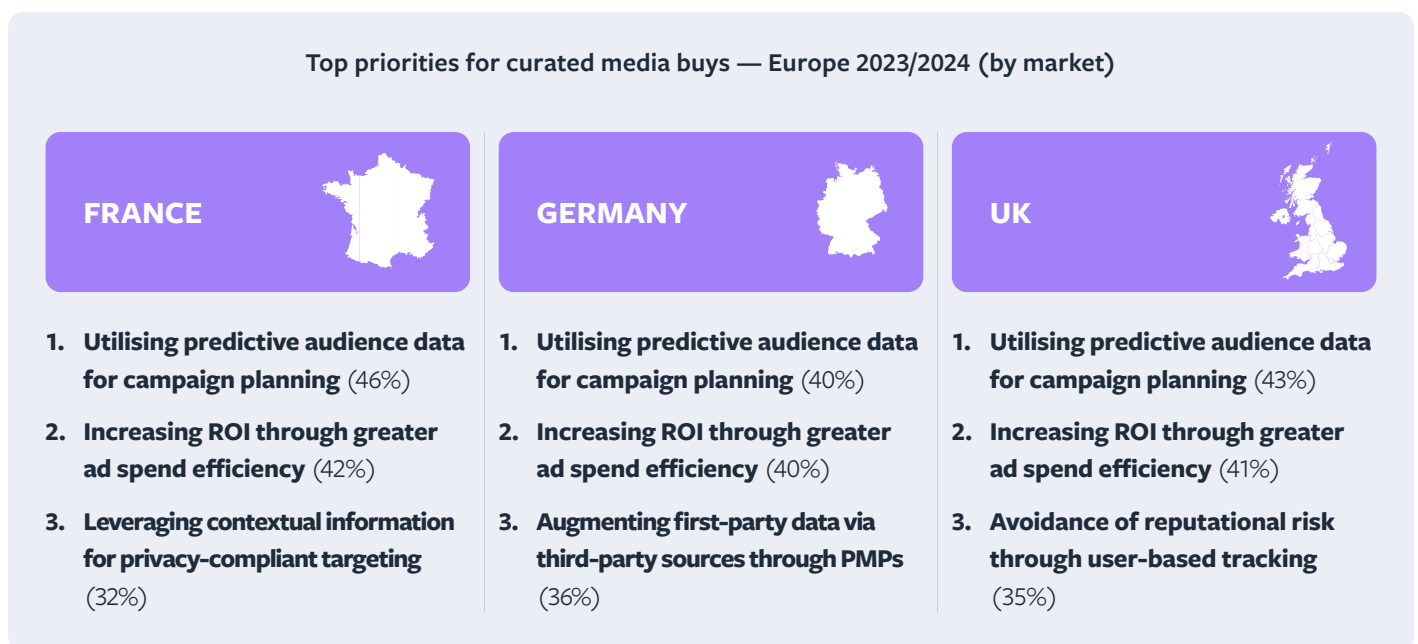


Leveraging predictive audience data for campaign planning was the leading priority for curated media buys across European brand and agency marketers, cited by 43% of respondents. How exactly is curation driving this? It can be seen to be driven by both the contextual use of data to predict likely characteristics (such as spending power, interests, or life stages) and the leveraging of first-party data applied on the supply-side with greater addressability for predictive audiences.

Similarly cited by a large number of respondents (41%) was improving ROI through greater ad spend efficiency. Also listed as common priorities were the avoidance of reputational risk through user-based tracking and leveraging contextual information for privacy-compliant targeting. Notably, all surveyed priorities were cited by at least 20% of respondents, indicating marketers across Europe are rapidly adopting the range of practical approaches to curation at this time.

Interestingly, marketing professionals in France were most actively exploring curated media buys (compared to marketers in the UK and Germany). All respondents in the French market reported directing some media spend to curation platforms, with 72% directing at least one-fifth of their spend (versus 49% of marketers in the UK, and 40% in Germany). We can certainly expect to see an increasing number of marketers adopting curation worldwide, as the industry nears a post-cookie future and sustainability becomes increasingly important.

Top priorities for curated media buys — Europe 2023/2024 (by market)



Further examining the study's findings regarding environmental priorities, professional marketers across all three regions were generally less concerned with reducing carbon emissions through targeted media buys. However, as the urgency of climate change grows and the public as well as the industry become increasingly conscious of addressing the climate catastrophe, this is quite likely to become more of a priority. Particularly as the industry continues shifting to adopt more green practices while curation becomes more widely adopted and its strong sustainability more clearly recognised.

Semantic Targeting and the Power of Contextual

Bringing our attention back to the approaching cookieless landscape, contextual advertising stands out as one of the best solutions currently on offer to help advertisers reach interested audiences in quality environments in a privacy friendly way, while delivering high personalisation. The nature of contextual can also eliminate concerns related to brand-safety.

Going a step further: semantic targeting is an advanced form of contextual advertising, which harnesses machine learning in order to understand the meaning of each page of content before an ad is served alongside it. Semantic targeting facilitates a much deeper and broader relevance for the serving of ads, unlikely to be achieved through regular programmatic contextual.

Delving deeper into the mechanics behind semantic targeting, greater accuracy can be achieved by going beyond the simple use of keywords. Advanced knowledge graphs are the engine that powers increased relevance based on the meaning and inter-relationship of content. Semantic targeting also goes beyond the use of categories, allowing marketers to narrow down on highly specific pages — contextual inventory can be chosen based on specific web content. Marketers are able to blend broader relevant content with highly targeted pages to achieve their desired results. For example, blending narrow topics of interest such as brand names, with medium ones such as product categories, to wider topics of interest such as environments where their brand may be used.

Another great advantage is this targeting technology significantly increases the scale of traditional contextual advertising beyond the limited scope of domain lists. Campaigns connect with relevant consumers wherever they are consuming relevant content topics across the premium Open Internet, including on general news, entertainment and lifestyle sites. This new approach makes advertiser budgets go further and work harder, helping ensure a diverse and well-funded premium Open Internet for all.

Applying semantic targeting can significantly boost campaign attention and performance metrics, including CTR increases of up to 5x that of the open auction observed across multiple industries. When leveraged with creative media and machine learning, harnessing contextual through semantic targeting can greatly improve marketers' KPIs. By utilising machine learning technology, it's not surprising the enhanced effects which can be achieved: as we know well, AI has completely transformed — and continues to transform the face of the ad tech landscape.

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Section 03

What the Industry Makes of Curation





For me personally, media curation isn't just about selecting placements; it's about harnessing data and insights to deliver high-performing, transparent campaigns that resonate with target audiences and drive results for our clients. By prioritising trustworthy sources and embracing transparency from the outset, we achieve optimal performance in a data-driven advertising landscape. Furthermore, as third-party cookies become less potent, curation allows us to leverage first-party data and audience insights to deliver even more relevant content.

At the7stars, we focus on delivering true business results by curating high-quality, trustworthy sources that resonate with our clients' target audiences. Our fully transparent media planning and buying model ensures that ads reach the most relevant viewers, eliminating wasted impressions. By simplifying the media mix, continuous experimentation, and evidence-based measurement we enable better budget allocation across channels, resulting in stronger ROI for our clients.

By curating premium, high-engagement environments across the programmatic ecosystem, we can consolidate media spends into one campaign and enjoy the benefits of optimising by frequency or data sets across suppliers and media channels.

This way, we increase the percentage of the budget that goes to working media and reduce the percentage of the media that is spent on technology and 'zero value add' players.

Looking ahead, the focus on sustainability, transparency, and the delayed deprecation of third-party cookies creates a fertile ground for media curation. With increased emphasis on responsible advertising practices, curated partnerships with eco-conscious and transparent media will be crucial, and it's very much what we're focusing on over the next 12 months and beyond."



Miglena Dimitrova

Head of Performance, the7stars



Havas Programmatic Hub has been adopting curated marketplaces since 2017. We have built our own solution, Meaningful Marketplace (MMP), ensuring programmatic benefits for our clients while increasing transparency and direct connections to publishers, minimising brand safety and ad fraud risk and supporting premium news brands.

By partnering with premium publishers and news brands that meet our curation requirements, and implementing a Supply Path Optimisation strategy, and by working with partner SSPs, we can deliver the most efficient and transparent routes, maximising percentages for publishers by avoiding routes where there are multiple tech taxes. This leads to both better quality and value placements for our clients.

Curated marketplaces can be created and developed with key industry trends in mind. Variants under the curation umbrella can address specific concerns such as sustainability, brand suitability, DE&I, transparency, and privacy. For example, our Sustainability Marketplace supports publishers raising awareness about climate change and our Social Equity Marketplace supports publishers that are owned and operated by underrepresented groups. We've seen investment in these marketplaces double year-on-year.

We also have curated packages for verticals such as entertainment and B2B, where we're leveraging rich publisher data and contextual capabilities, without the use of additional layering in the demand side platform.

This leads to a reduction in overall cost for our clients, and allows us to have greater collaboration and accountability with our tech partners and publishers.

Our goal is to continue to grow these marketplaces and optimise supply to provide the best media activations for our clients, supporting a transparent, fair and sustainable programmatic ecosystem.”



Layla Malki

Director of Programmatic,
Havas Media Network



Curation houses suddenly seem to be everywhere in the programmatic space. As the industry shifts away from cookies and many media buyers move away from managed service solutions, there's a surge in opportunities for both new entrants and established companies to flourish.

There is no doubt that curation has a place for agency buyers. Businesses that are offering unique data partnerships layered onto specific inventory are of interest to agencies as well as advertisers, and arguably always have been. There can also be plenty of innovation in the space, and we want to connect our clients to those cutting-edge developments whenever possible.

In an era where AI and custom algorithms feature heavily in pitch decks, curators need to make sure they are highlighting the clear, added value of their offerings. The real winners in the curation era will be those who can demonstrate unique access to new signals or a fresh approach to unlocking the rich value within publishers' audiences.”



Nick Hill

Head of Programmatic,
EMEA at EssenceMediacom



The old way of advertising simply won't work with the deprecation of third-party cookies. Reliance on DSPs for efficient ad buying comes at a cost, as DSPs prioritise their performance over media buyer (and marketer) objectives, leading to reduced visibility of valuable inventory. Additionally, setting fixed CPMs for data can exclude buyers from valuable impressions due to efficiency constraints. Digital marketers and agency media buyers are already feeling the effects of data erosion and choked addressability.

Curation significantly benefits marketers and publishers while creating an improved experience for consumers. By addressing data quality and inventory reliability challenges, Lotame's curation service provides a strategic collaboration between the data and supply sides, leveraging differentiated data to develop custom audiences aligned with marketer KPIs.

This streamlined approach reduces the burden on agencies by eliminating unnecessary decision-making and waste, ensuring that every impression sent to the DSP is high-performing. The result is an optimised supply side that delivers improved performance and enhances campaign outcomes.

Where our offering really shines is in the added value insights we're uniquely positioned to deliver. We're able to deliver incremental, unduplicated reach to our clients by leveraging that custom audience's behavioural clues. Efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation are becoming synonymous with curation offerings like ours, and for good reason."



Eli Heath
Head of Identity, Lotame

ABOUT ONETAG

Onetag Smart Curation provides your co-pilot for better media performance.

Our programmatic deal platform and AI-powered technology deliver more effective digital advertising for the open internet, harnessing deeper placement level intelligence to achieve your business outcomes.

We feed every DSP with curated, high performing impressions from over 2,000 directly integrated publishers, using real-time data without cookies.

We filter out all the wastage and optimise to deliver only high attention and uncluttered inventory, contextual relevance and engaged users.

To learn more, visit www.onetag.com

ABOUT EXCHANGEWIRE

ExchangeWire provides news and analysis on the business of media, marketing and commerce with a specific focus on data and technology. We offer actionable market intelligence on the trends and innovations that are shaping the media, marketing and commerce industries.

We're always interested in any technology and business-related news globally, and in particular across EMEA and APAC. Relevant companies are encouraged to get in touch. We're also interested in hearing from PR people working with companies in any of the areas named above.