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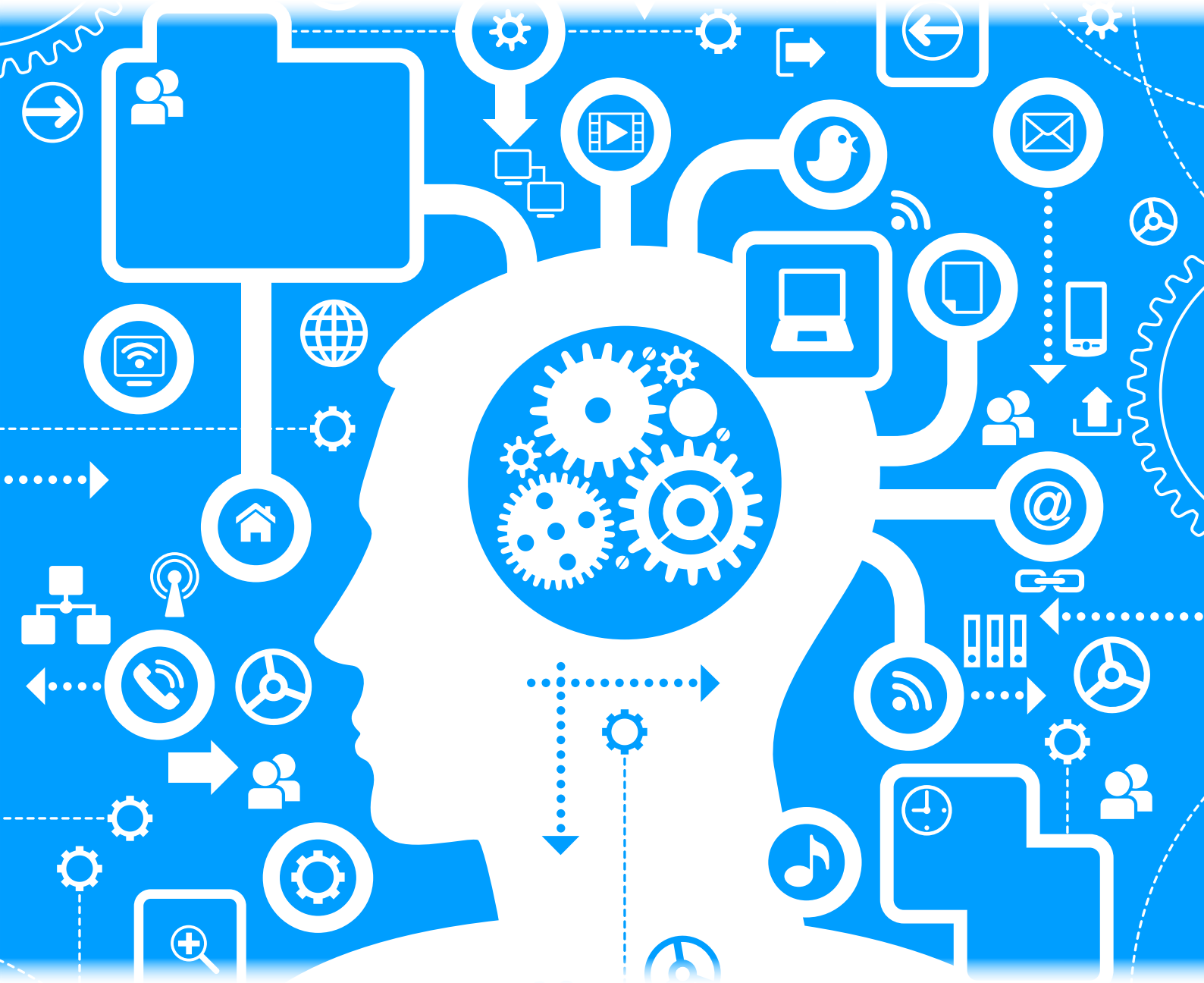
Personalizing Through Programmatic



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1

What Is Programmatic Advertising

If you ask a handful of marketers to describe programmatic advertising, you're unlikely to get two similar explanations. For some, it's the buying of ads just like one would buy goods from Amazon, while another may say it's the next step in automating media buying through sophisticated algorithms. All of these advertisers would be telling you at least part of the truth.

The term programmatic gets used for a variety of different elements, but at its core is an automated process for selling and buying ad units and other digital media through technology marketplaces. Automated purchasing decreases human administrative labor needs and can deliver ads when a potential customer is available and looking for the right product.

Programmatic aims to achieve the industry adage: deliver the right ad to right person at right time.

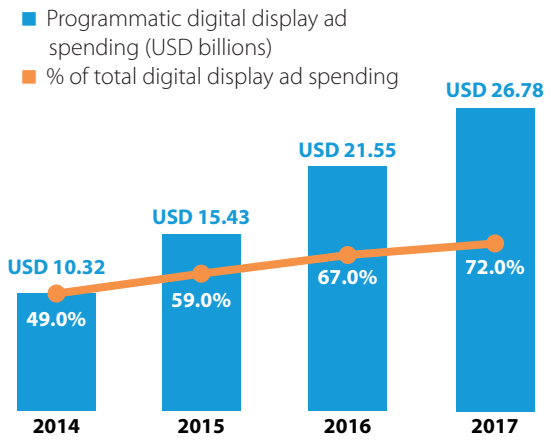
Experts told us that programmatic marketing has helped to bring down customer acquisition costs. For many it performs more like search than traditional display and gives companies easier access to advertising based on target audience data. Because labor is reduced on the selling side as well, many publishers have begun to open private marketplaces in lieu of additional exchanges.

The ability to target ad inventory based on specific data, such as demographics and browsing habits, presents a large opportunity for travel and hospitality brands. Marketers can align their marketing goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with programmatic ads to achieve strong results and improve their advertising Return on Investment (ROI).

Programmatic is technology that allows for more productive and effective advertising, but its success depends on smart usage and strong partnerships.

Fundamentally, programmatic is changing the marketplace, accounting for 49% of US Digital ad sales in 2013 and is projected to grow to 72% by 2017 (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: Programmatic's Share of US Digital Ad Sales



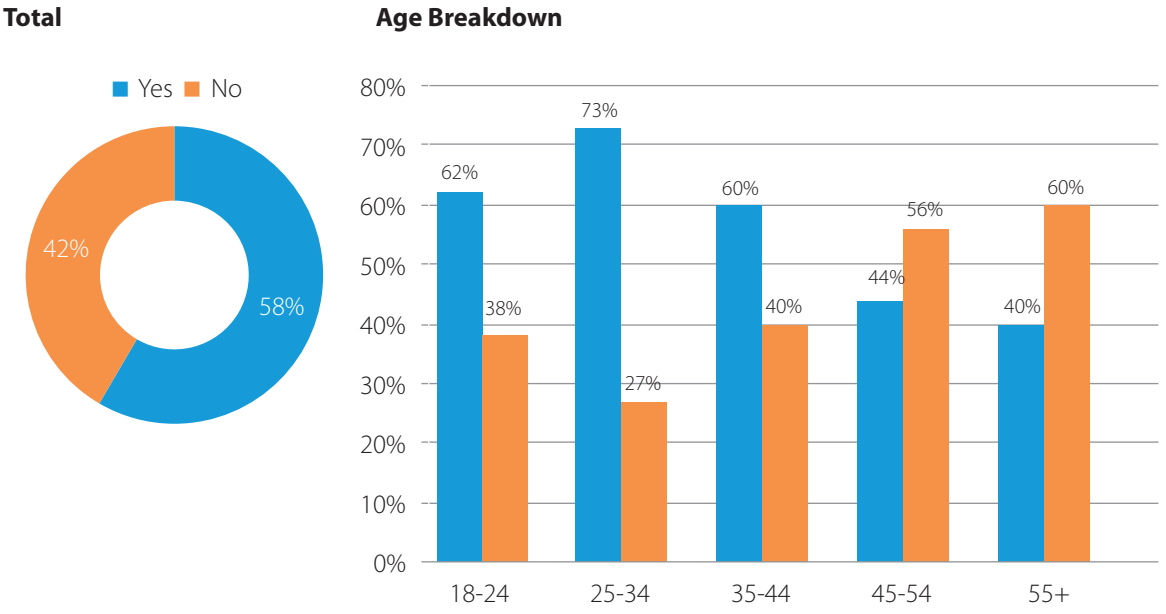
Source: eMarketer, 2015a

1.1 A Brief History of a Fundamental Practice

Programmatic advertising got its foundations at the start of the consumer Internet when search engine marketing took off. Two major ad staples – AdWords and Overture – were essentially programmatic advertising. Advertisers purchased space next to a specific search term and were delivered in real-time whenever that search term was used.

In the early 2000s, display advertising began to adopt the automated features now defined as programmatic. Dynamic ad display servers were able to provide real-time bidding features affordably because inventory was high but demand was low.

Figure 2: Have You Ever Clicked On a Mobile Ad?



Source: Adadyn, 2015a, 1,000 respondents

Today, public and private marketplaces are growing based on their ability to collate data, provide affordable placement and serve up unique features such as content personalization. That personalization is expanding to video and native content, expanding the types of ads that are supported by programmatic. Tomorrow, television and dynamic, streaming audio are likely to be the next focus areas for programmatic.

1.2 What Does Programmatic Cover?

Programmatic advertising covers the automation and data-based improvement of purchasing through methods such as Real-Time Bidding (RTB) and standard volume-based sales of advertising units.

For a system to be truly programmatic, it must be able to handle the layers of audience and targeting information. The process must be largely automated simply because of the complexity of inventory buying using all of these real-time data sets, alongside an understanding of campaign budgets, goals, and ad testing.

Mobile remains the hardest sector for programmatic to address, largely because of struggles with properly targeting customers across multiple devices. Mobile programmatic digital display ad spending will reach USD 9.33 billion this year, eclipsing desktop and laptop at USD 6.1 billion (eMarketer 2015b).

It presents a strong travel opportunity considering 58% of respondents in an Adadyn survey said they have clicked on a mobile ad (see Figure 2). Moreover, this is set to grow as people ages 25 to 34 and those aged 18 to 24 were the most likely to have clicked on a mobile ad (Adadyn, 2015a).

Programmatic is moving toward a device-agnostic deployment and many of today's tools can be used to reach both desktop and mobile consumers (see Section 4.5.1.).

1.3 What Is the Programmatic Process?

The Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) slices programmatic buying into two categories: direct and RTB. RTB will feel familiar to most advertisers because it operates much like AdWords - just for display content instead of search-oriented units. Direct programmatic purchases leverage all of the available data and targeting tools, but the sale is consummated directly instead of running an auction. Demand for programmatic direct buying is growing due to advertiser pressure based on its perceived transparency.

"The market is starting to ask us more for a fixed-price, guaranteed impression buy. They want to know that if they set a campaign up on Friday, when they come back on Monday they'll have results. They don't want a campaign that's had no impressions," said Kevin

Clapson, TripAdvisor's vice president of display advertising in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Purchasing of both units is done on an ad exchange, which is a marketplace where publishers list and sell their online display, mobile, and video inventory. Advertisers define the characteristics of the ad inventory they want to buy and place bids on ads based on how valuable they think the person viewing the ad will be.

Every advertiser will place a different value on each viewer based on how their demographics, device, ad type, and ad position match with the advertiser's goals.

1.3.1 Public Exchanges

Public exchanges remain the most common programmatic options with advertisers buying more than 70 billion ad impressions each day (ProgrammaticAdvertising.Org, 2014). These exchanges typically have the most inventory and the widest variety, with options for buyers are almost every budget level (ProgrammaticAdvertising.Org, 2014).

Presently, there is enough inventory that companies with small budgets can avoid competing directly with companies who have large budgets and run affordable programmatic campaigns.

1.3.2 Private Exchanges

Private advertising exchanges provide a more selective set of ad inventory and they often operate as programmatic direct services, such as the Brightroll Exchange and OpenX's Private Mobile Exchange.

These exchanges are usually run by large publishers and work with a curated set of agencies, trading desks, and Demand-Side-Platforms (DSPs). These exchanges have better price controls and policies, but better opportunities across short-tail and long-tail content.

The main hurdle to accessing private exchange inventory was the ability to make large-scale purchases.

Today, technology platforms are purchasing inventory directly from exchanges, allowing any customer to access this restricted inventory without meeting a size or scale requirement.

1.3.3 Retargeting Is the Key

Programmatic site retargeting is an advanced form of site retargeting that uses data and analytics to retarget audience segments with relevant information.

Messaging can be customized to each target based on many factors collected as first-party or third-party data. Common elements in travel programmatic site retargeting include:

- Visitor behavior and cart activity.
- Referral data.
- Related site activity; such as searching for a flight to a destination being used for retargeting by hotel brands in the same location.

Bridging and leveraging unique data points – such as placing ads for event packages or car rentals based on a user's recent history of looking at or booking a hotel room – is a necessity for travel brand success.

1.4 Tracking and Mobile

The demand for programmatic advertising and programmatic site retargeting has pushed beyond the capabilities of cookies. Cookies typically are cleared away by users roughly every two weeks and fail to provide a consistent view of a customer across devices. This has created some concerns regarding their feasibility, particularly on mobile. However, efforts are underway to address this (see Section 4.5.1.).

Brands are now looking to universal logins and device recognition. Universal logins, such as using Facebook details to create a new account for a hotel chain website, make it easier to track users as they move between devices or across the Web. Data is in the hands of login holders, but many such companies are willing to sell information and provide retargeting support.

Mobile is seen as the future of e-tail and it might be the richest mine advertisers can use. Mobile devices are inherently personal and can help advertisers to continuously target a specific individual in a much stronger manner than a shared computer, such as a PC in a family room. There is a chance the ad reaches the wrong target on a PC, but mobile placement can avoid that significantly.

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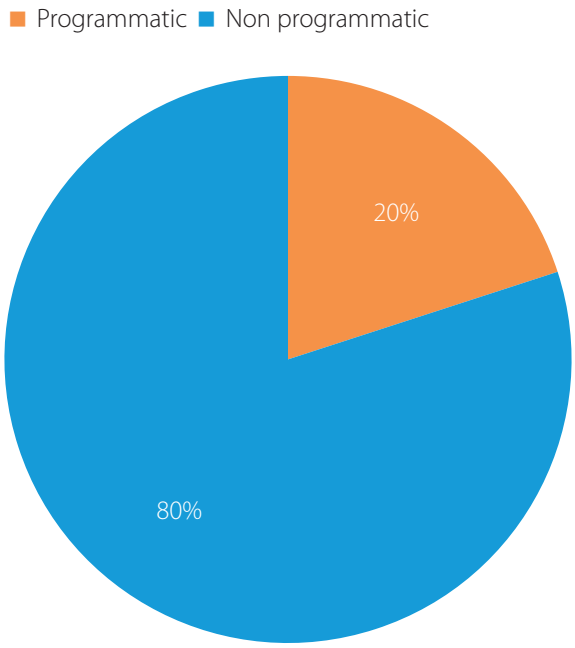
Why Is Programmatic Important for Travel Brands?

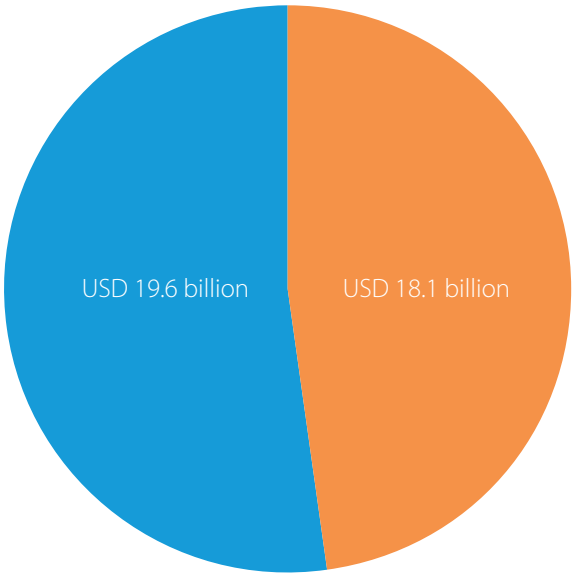
Programmatic advertising is growing each year and accounted for around one-fifth of all Internet ad revenue last year. In the U.S. alone, programmatic display ad spending is expected to rise 59% this year to USD15-18 billion. eMarketer also estimates that 60% of all programmatic spend will be used to target mobile devices (eMarketer, 2015a and IAB & PwC, 2015a).

Figure 4: Programmatic's Share of all Internet Ad Revenue for 2014



Source: Source: IAB & PwC, 2015a

Figure 5: Display Ad Revenue for 2014

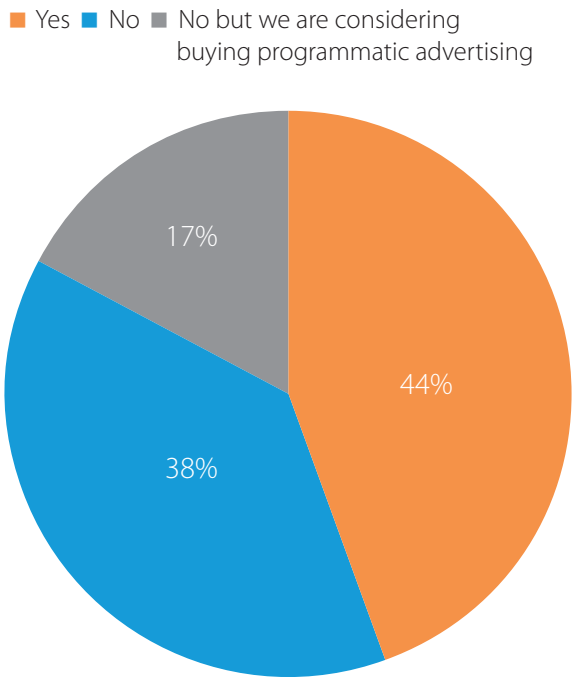


Source: IAB & PwC, 2015a

Programmatic advertising already accounts for 25% of all travel spend and 69% of travel display. By the end of 2015, it will comprise 59% of all non-search digital advertising. With global ad spend expected to eclipse USD 554 billion next year, programmatic should remain a major source of investment for travel brands and revenue for agencies (Digital Strategy Consulting, 2015).

Some 44% of travel brands we surveyed are currently purchasing through programmatic channels and another 17% are considering it according to a Q3 2015 EyeforTravel survey of travel industry marketing executives (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Does Your Organization Buy Digital display advertising through programmatic channels?



Source: EyeforTravel, 2015a. 126 respondents

The same survey also noted a large majority of travel brands are looking to increase marketing budgets over the next 12 months, which may help smaller brands overcome their cost concerns.

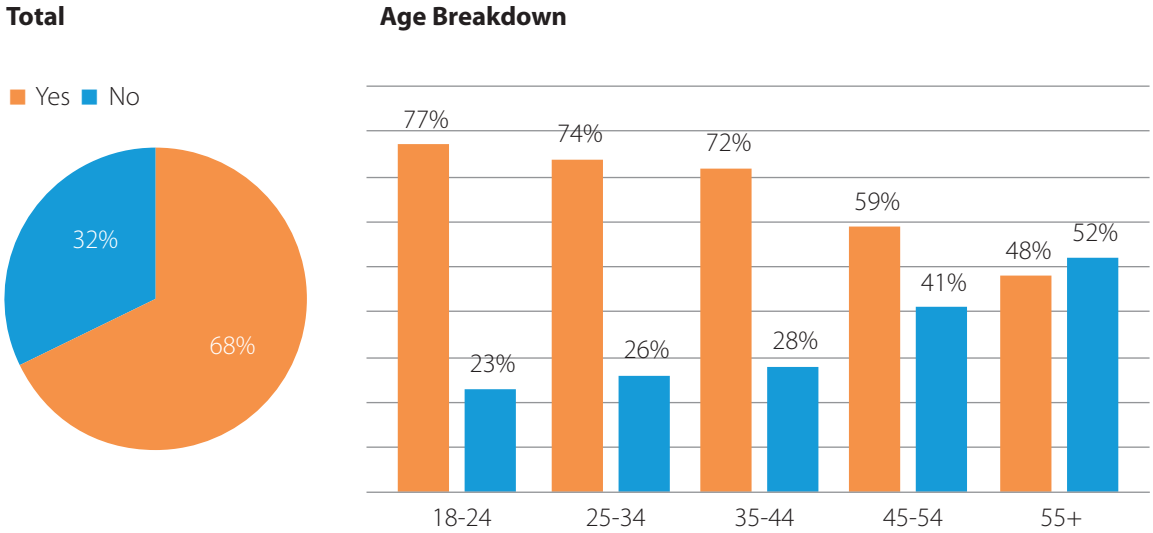
Travel purchasers typically perform research five to seven times before they make a purchase, according to the experts we spoke to. Retargeting has become the most effective strategy for building return visitors and converting them, and the success of retargeting only goes up when more data is leveraged to meet the established wants of each individual visitor (ReTargeter, 2015).

Furthermore, consumers are not just growing accustomed to relevant ads delivered by programmatic means, it is becoming an expectation. According to an Adadyn survey from July 2015, 68% of people find it useful to get ads relevant to time and place (Adadyn, 2015a).

"The travel industry is awash with really good data. The level of customers' personal data that travel has is unique to just a few industries. Programmatic tools allow for the onboarding of this data unlike any other platform, so it's a strong opportunity for travel," said Benjamin Dick, Director of Industry Initiatives at IAB.

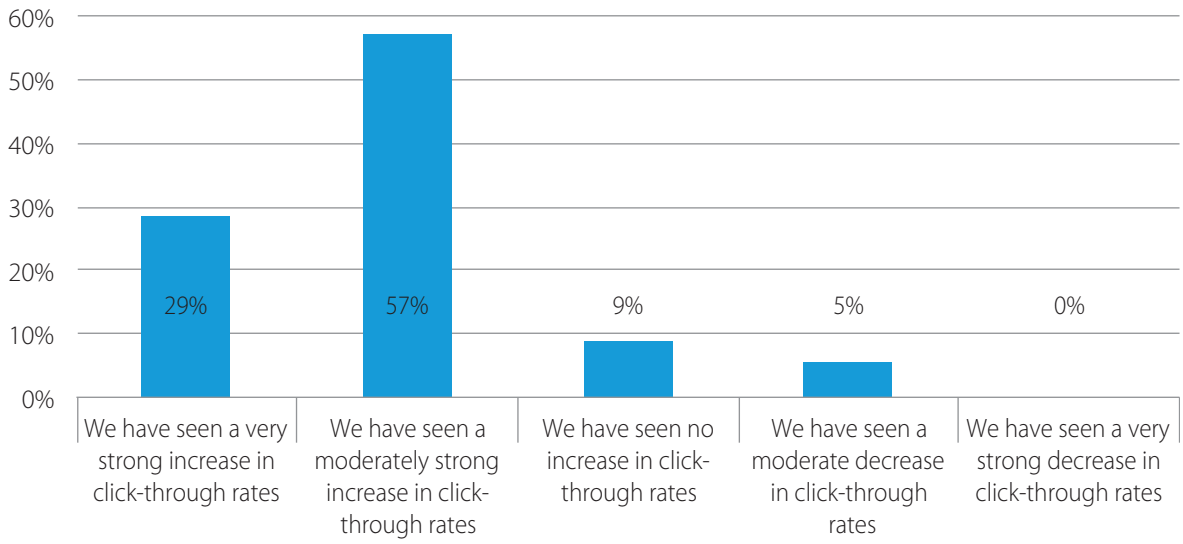
> *"Programmatic tools allow for the onboarding of this data unlike any other platform, so it's a strong opportunity for travel"*
>
> **Benjamin Dick, Director of Industry Initiatives, IAB**

Figure 7: Considering Mobile, Is It Useful to Receive Ads That Are Relevant to Time and Place?



Source: Adadyn, 2015a. 1,000 respondents

Figure 8: How Does Your Programmatic Click-through Rate Compare to Traditional Display Advertising?



Source: EyeforTravel, 2015a. 56 respondents

2.1 Understanding Search and Attribution

Paid search advertising is expected to account for 47% of total online spending and will make up about half of all mobile advertising budgets this year (CMO Council, 2015). Programmatic is cutting into this, especially for smaller travel brands who need a cost-effective way to compete for the most popular keywords.

This is because programmatic plays an important role in targeting and retargeting customers for continued success. Moreover, it may even play a larger role in successful conversion than currently thought, with some 86% of travel brands noting an increase in click-through rates thanks to programmatic (see Figure 8).

"Search often gets a disproportionate amount of credit compared to any other channel. Attribution really depends on how you're measuring success," said Dick. "There's a lot of talk about what attribution models should look like. Should the last event get the credit for a conversion or should we be looking at the bigger picture to understand the overall landscape?"

He noted that the average customer – across almost any industry – can see a wide range of visuals and ad units before they perform a specific search.

"If you think about the travel cycle, it's often 70 to 80 days. A person isn't going to book something the first day they see an ad. But can it influence their decision making? It sure can," Clapson said.

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"The goal of an attribution model should be to step back and let the math suggest what ads are helping conversions," said Jonathan Isernhagen Director of Analytics & Insights at Wyndham Hotel Group. "If some marketing is starting conversation but never getting credit on a last-click basis, a good attribution model should still be able to identify tight correlations to this earlier activity."

As the industry learns more about the true effects of attribution models, and the role of programmatic within those models, there may be less of an emphasis on search when known customers and known visitors are being targeted in the sales funnel.

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2.2 Video and Mobile Will Maintain High Growth Rates

Video advertising gives brands a way to show their human side and tell a compelling story that's been proven to resonate with consumers. Thanks to a multitude of high-quality screens in pockets, outside shops, on the road, and in many more new places, consumers are familiar with and happy to engage with video content.

This mass acceptance has led to a strong growth in video advertising, driven largely by programmatic and mobile ads. Mobile itself is growing at a rate of 51% this year and it is expected to push video ad growth by 22% over the same time (Digital Strategy Consulting, 2015).

Mobile is a compelling place for travel brands and offers inherent benefits because it's becoming the preferred interaction point for consumers. Targeting mobile users via device IDs – covered in greater detail in following chapters – will help brands turn data into consumption patterns based on current, as well as future, location. This could shape new opportunities such as up-selling at airports.

Video's strong performance will come with a bigger cost, which may rise as more brands compete for the inventory. When looking at the growth, it's important to measure campaigns and big video plays against specific KPIs and goals.

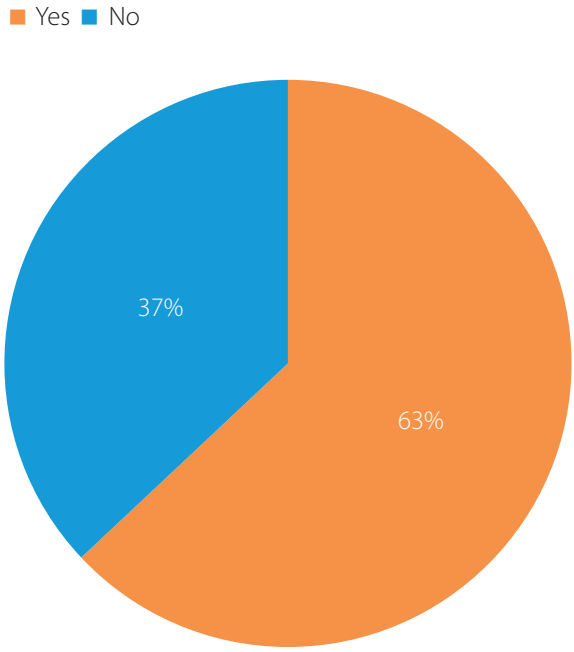
"For a branding campaign, most brands are going to want to focus on high-end glossy inventory like video, rich media and native," said Dick. "If you know where people fit in the sales funnel you can usually find them with lower-cost media."

2.3 Optimize Retargeting Based on Returns

An Adadyn study of US consumers found that 69% of respondents said getting an ad for a recently visited site is helpful when deciding to complete a purchase (Adadyn, 2015a)

Figure 9: Consumers Are Willing to Accept Retargeting

Are you more likely to click on an ad if it contains the image of an advertiser's product you had viewed previously?



Source: Adadyn, 2015a. 1,000 respondents

"Someone searching for a flight from New York today is a far better qualifier than someone who had booked a flight to New York or showed intent in the past 30 days, but that data is still very useful," said Clapson.

Retargeting is one of the most powerful advertising tools, but it also can be one of the most annoying tools to consumers.

"When you're an advertiser, nobody wants to annoy people. These tools are best used to make sure that your ads are relevant to people who might want to buy your product," said Dick. "Any good advertiser needs to understand where the diminishing returns begin. You don't want to hit someone 10 times if you know that after the seventh they're not going to purchase."

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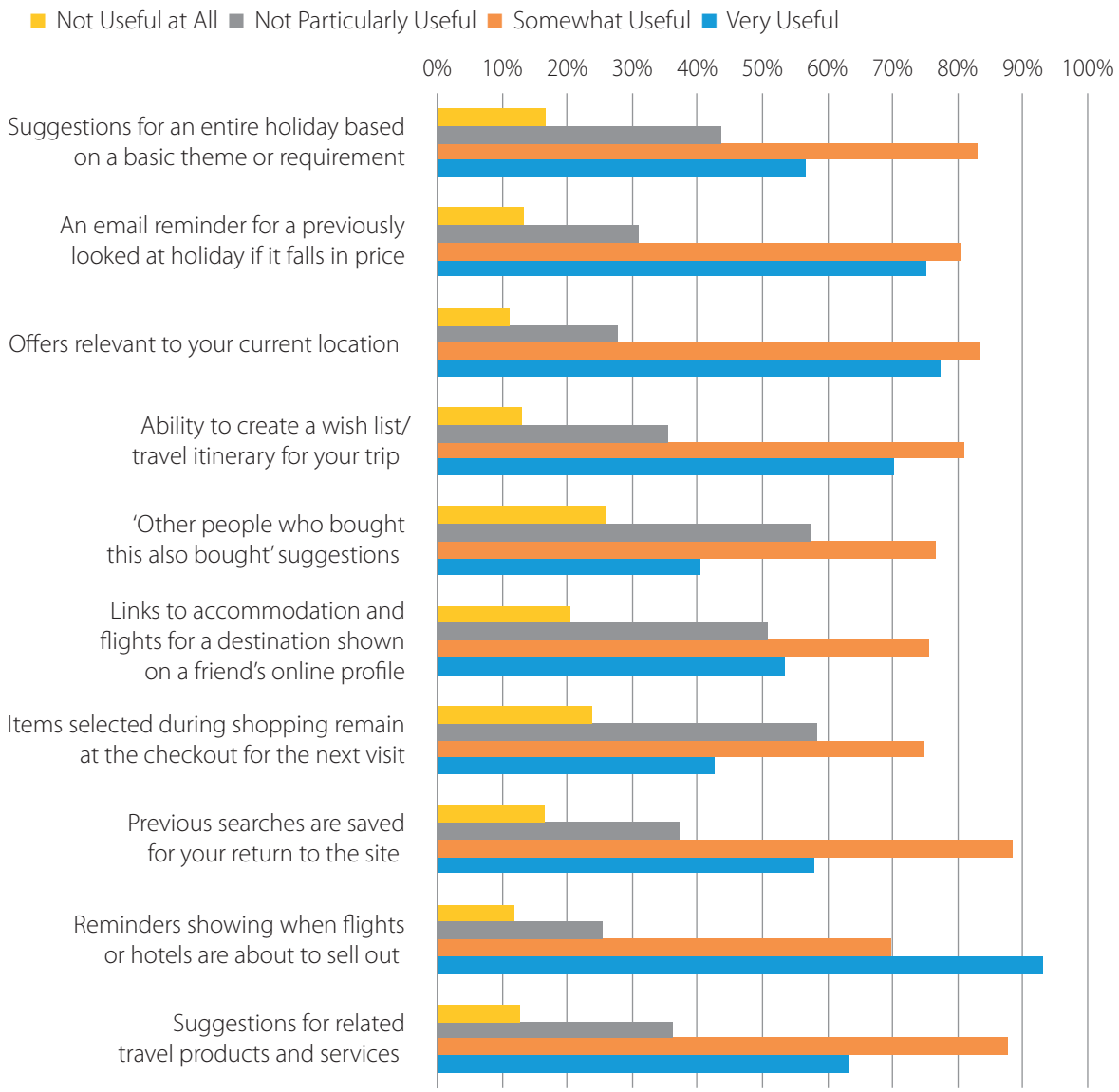
> **Benjamin Dick, Director of Industry Initiatives, IAB**

Figure 10: How Useful Do Users Find Travel Information?



Source: EyeforTravel 2015b

The inflection point is different for each brand, and sometimes for each product type. To understand where it lies, travel brands should look to the data they're collecting and what's provided by their ad partners. Data tells the retargeting success story and can help brands stay on top of their spending.

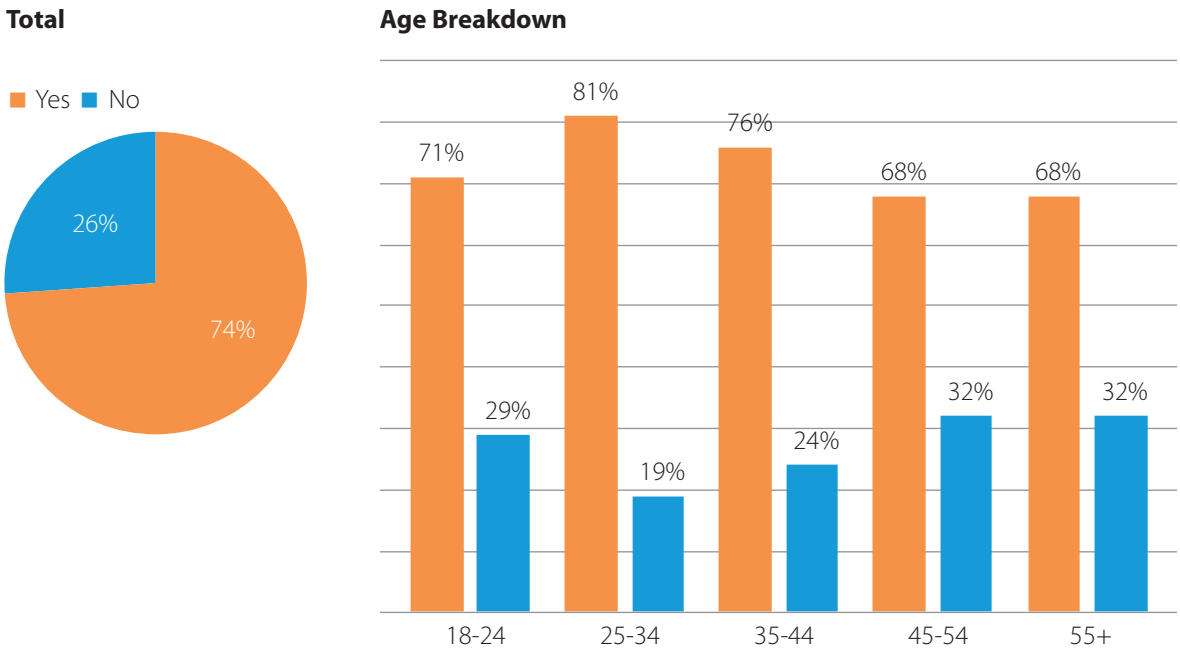
The industry is often afraid of coming off as "creepy" by using too much data. Retargeting can run this risk as well because it relies on a sophisticated range of information. Brands should work with ad partners to get the most complete understanding of customers, and that includes learning where the limits are for consumer segments before they find the advertising disconcerting.

2.4 Data Must Be How Travel Customers Are Definted

Companies who are using an enterprise-level data management platform can use programmatic platforms to make much more accurate decisions about who they're targeting and also measure on-site performance to their KPIs.

Figure 11: Understanding Retargeting and Cross-Selling Opportunities.

Are you more likely to click on an ad for travel if it's targeted towards vacation destinations you've searched for previously?



Source: Adadyn, 2015a. 1,000 respondents

Data layers are extremely important because they provide the capabilities necessary to understand customers. Mobile isn't always a sure bet and two desktop users may be strikingly different based on their activity.

Data isn't enough of differentiator on its own; brands need to be smart with it as well. They should work to identify consumers in different channels and respond appropriately. The Costs Per Acquisition (CPA) on popular, non-sales sites such as Facebook should be lower than CPAs in defined sales channels because Facebook users are less likely to be in a purchasing mode.

"Having too much data can also be a problem if a company doesn't know how to use the data or segment it to understand what it is saying on a granular level about their audience. Knowing how to segment and use this data can present a barrier to entry for smaller and mid-sized businesses," noted Dick.

Targeting capabilities will provide a significant opportunity for high-level execution, especially across mobile devices. This makes an analytics platform and a sophisticated programmatic platform partner important for any travel brand.

"A lot of people are sitting on a goldmine of data, but they don't have the tools to decipher what all of the data means and what they can do with it. Knowing what data means is a significant challenge and opportunity," said Lorenzo Harris, Senior Market Specialist at TripCase.

"Brands must ask how software providers verify domains, keep creative on the right sites, look for true human (not bots) visitors, and also how they provide assurance to the inventory holders. Creative must have guidelines and audits to prevent maliciousness. That's how brands safely adopt programmatic," said Adadyn COO Raj Beri.

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Adopting Programmatic

Programmatic buying isn't as complex as it once was, allowing small and mid-sized brands to start enjoying its benefits. The main change that's opened the floodgates is a new series of technology service providers that manage most of the sophisticated data, testing and other automated processes.

The adoption of a programmatic paradigm typically comes in five steps:

- **Step 1: The Audience**
- **Step 2: Selecting Technology**
- **Step 3: Build Your Creative**
- **Step 4: Target Every Screen**
- **Step 5: Measure and Review**

While each deployment is unique and one brand may have more work in a step than others, the basic flow of programmatic adoption is the same. Travel brands should always keep in mind the need to keep their strategy simple and what data will allow their programmatic efforts to start successfully.

3.1 Keeping Things Simple

Core KPIs should be at the heart of every entrance into programmatic. The more a travel brand can distil its needs into a few measurable elements, the better its chance at seeing a strong ROI early on.

Travel is among the most competitive markets and large players hold a disproportionate amount of search volume. Programmatic is an easier space for brands to compete in, but that flexibility can often create large demands that don't align with brand values.

"New users often come in and try to do incredibly complex things, which can be a frustrating experience if they don't have a basis in programmatic," said Rob Sopkic, SVP of Sales for Adadyn. "A big challenge for the industry is to simplify not just offerings but the goals and the software used."

"Sometimes brands try to get so granular that they reach a point that the data is overwhelming," noted Harris.

> *"Sometimes brands try to get so granular that they reach a point that the data is overwhelming"*
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> **Lorenzo Harris, Senior Market Specialist, TripCase**

3.2 Data-Driven Needs

Brands that want to derive the most value from programmatic need to live and breathe data and use it to run their business. Programmatic has value for brands of any size, but it can be limited by a culture that doesn't understand the data it has or how to leverage it.

Programmatic platforms can provide insights into what data may mean, but creating a data-driven culture can help brands avoid gaps.

"I don't think that data-driven media investment is ever going to pay the dividends if you're not a data-driven company," said Ashley Swartz, CEO of Furious Corp. "It's like the woman who works at a makeup stand and doesn't wear makeup, or the skinny chef. You can't overcome the incongruity there."

3.3 Step 1: The Audience

The first step for travel brands to adopt programmatic advertising is a moment of introspection.

Brands need to look at their existing data and audience information, organizing as best as possible for use in business decisions. Excel still remains a chief tool for small and mid-sized companies, according to the experts we spoke with, and most new programmatic ad platforms can work with it. Platforms that provide tag management systems can generate further improvements by making it easier to process your data.

Take spreadsheets or other marketing tools and organize your audience. Aggregate data whenever possible to create detailed campaign data, CRM data, analytics and interaction information. Continually work on this data and analyze it to monitor performance and determine audience segments that are the most profitable.

Real-time programmatic ads work well when audiences are defined with specific parameters. When a real-time ad is delivered to a targeted individual, they are twice as likely to interact with it (Magna Global, 2015). That being said, "the simple fact is: the more people you can add into your funnel to start thinking about your brand, the more chance you have of converting that sale and the more opportunities you have in a retargeting strategy," according to Clapson.

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3.4 Step 2: Selecting Technology

Programmatic buying and execution require integrated technology platforms to properly operate. Today, these systems not only can purchase inventory in real-time but they also allow travel brands to target customers across multiple channels and devices.

For small and mid-sized brands, a technology provider should not only integrate well with existing marketing systems, but should also provide access to a wide range of exchanges. Integrated technology provides marketers with a single place to buy, optimize, place and measure campaigns, providing an easier way to track campaign success and audience segments.

Technology vendors are creating relationships with ad exchanges, allowing brands large or small to purchase inventory. By working with the right vendor, companies no longer need to worry about a minimum monthly buy-in to get access to an exchange.

3.4.1 What a Partner Needs

A good technology platform for a brand is one that operates as a partner. Services need to provide more than just a SaaS platform because they are the entrance point for small travel brands into the programmatic space.

Good partners should have:

- Relationships with top programmatic and other ad exchanges such as OpenX, DoubleClick Ad Exchange, and Rubicon Project. These three are some of the top programmatic sellers that travel brands are using, along with the Facebook Exchange (FBX), Centro Brand Exchange, and Sovrn. Access to third-party data, or at least the ability to integrate it with campaigns.
- Intelligent targeting tools and a built-in retargeting solution.
- Support for personalizing creative content on the fly.
- An internal audit process that reviews both ad inventory and creative to limit fraudulent impressions or malicious content.

It is worth mentioning that unlike many other areas of advertising, fraud was not a major concern or barrier to adoption for travel brands (see Figure 13).

3.4.2 Data That Brands Need

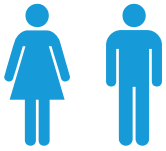
Programmatic advertisers will use first-party and third-party data in all of their campaigns and placements. Data-driven strategies that identify targets and allocate spend are at the core of programmatic, but what data should brands seek?

In travel, there is no specific set of information that is always the most relevant. Brands will need to review a variety of metrics around customers to determine their intent to make a travel-related purchase. Data sources should include first-party information provided by container tags and data management platforms and

third-party data provided via cookies, opt-in tracking, registrations, and off-site transactions.

Some of the data points that can help determine intent – and come from both internal data and the programmatic platform provider or other partners – include:

Age



Gender

Family information

Location

Household income

Real-time behavior & website activity

Legacy Web behavior

Check-in information

Reservation records

Folio data

Purchase history

Competitive spend data

Younger travelers, those aged 20 to 29, are the most willing to provide travel organizations with specific mobile usage (EyeforTravel, 2015b). In an EyeforTravel survey, consumers aged 20 to 24 were most willing to provide app usage data (17%), while those aged 25 to 29 led in sharing GPS location data from their mobile with 31% (EyeforTravel, 2015b).

To get the most out of this data, brands should ask their third-party providers about how data is collected and how recent it is. Data that comes from recently refreshed cookie pools, has offline components, and requires a recent action can be a strong sell (Lunt, 2015). Marketers should also ask how much data is extrapolated and how much activity is required for a customer to be placed in audience segments.

"Marrying first-party and third-party data is where you unlock the exponential value of programmatic," said Furious Corp CEO Ashley Swartz. "Combining these data sets can deliver micro-segments so travel companies can better predict response patterns and drive a higher performance."

> *"Marrying first-party and third-party data is where you unlock the exponential value of programmatic, combining these data sets can deliver micro-segments so travel companies can better predict response patterns and drive a higher performance."*
>
> **Ashley Swartz, CEO, Furious Corp**

"A lot of the travel industry comes in with strong first-party data and cookies to help track across multiple sites."

First-party succeeds best when it is backed by third-party information. Brands should work with their technology partners to determine how third-party data will be billed and then make judgments on its value relative to the incremental cost.

"As long as we use the data to provide our guests with relevant content that they like, [with] the richness of the data that's available across social, web, first party and

every other area, it will be beneficial for the guests and for every area of our business," said Gordon Ho, Senior Vice President of Global Marketing and North America Sales at Princess Cruises.

3.4.3 When Is In-House Expertise Necessary?

Having an in-depth understanding of programmatic or other advertising techniques is always useful, for marketers of any size. However, as can be seen in the concerns noted in Figure 13 it is not always in the budget of smaller brands to hire programmatic experts. That's when technology must bridge the knowledge gap.

"If you need someone with a Ph.D. in programmatic to run the SaaS platform, it really isn't accessible to a mid-market player," said Raj Beri, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Adadyn.

Today's platforms can minimize the amount of in-house knowledge required to operate within programmatic exchanges, so marketers with other areas of expertise can still operate these programs efficiently. The most important considerations are an understanding of budget allocation, audience segmentation to drive campaigns, and which metrics tie back directly to business measures.

"I really want to make sure that brands are asking questions about metrics and business goals to make sure agencies or tech providers are buying the best programmatic inventory for them," said TripAdvisor's Clapson.

Programmatic systems can't turn a non-marketer into a guru, but it can simplify the process enough that an experienced marketer can make smart business decisions and run successful campaigns.

3.4.4 Final Selection

Available data sets, analytics tools, and APIs are making it much easier for brands to work with a variety of partners. A chosen platform should provide further support for integration.

Travel brands should look to platforms with many existing relationships and rely on the platform maker to bring new opportunities by adding support for additional exchanges and business tools. Cloud services can remove a lot of the integration headache and work from the plate of the travel brand.

The final criterion is ensuring that you have the capability to experiment in your programmatic buying through A/B testing, gathering feedback, and receiving action-oriented data in a way that can be quickly analyzed.

3.5 Step 3: Build Your Creative

The creative you put together will depend on the technology platform you've selected. The main focus here is the ability to create content that is flexible and works with personalization features in the programmatic buying platform.

As discussed, mobile is becoming a significant area of importance for travel, and advertising in general. A unique factor about some mobile environments is that they are not Flash-compatible. This can be seen in larger web trends, as just 19% of all sites use Flash as of October, 2015, down from 49% in November, 2010 (HTTP Archive, 2015).

The audience on PCs, tablets, and smartphones is more likely to be able to handle HTML5, so crafting content in that language may be more beneficial than Flash units. HTML5 also typically loads faster and places less burden on both device and 3G/4G network, engaging users faster and limiting bad experiences due to slow load times.

Travel ads in programmatic campaigns are often related to information and retargeted to prompt a sale. This means brands don't necessarily need to target mobile functions like accelerometers or gestures, but location information and call functionality can be strong performers.

Ad platforms can support logic-based units and these can be used to deliver the most relevant ad to viewers in real-time by working with first-party and third-party data. This is most effective when decisions are related back to business KPIs and goals, so brands must have conversations that cross media, data, and management teams.

The final check on creative is the review it against past work or results from current campaigns. Smart software can help marketers determine the reasoning behind A/B testing results and campaign successes. These should always be injected back into the creative campaign.

We will discuss personalization in greater detail in Chapter 4.

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3.6 Step 4: Target Every Screen

Once data is gathered and creative is prepped, it's time to buy advertising and test the success of various ad units. Buying media across a variety of categories and targets can maximize exposure for each asset.

The data from Step 1 can be leveraged by your platform to identify new audience segments to target for incremental performance. It simplifies A/B testing to meet more of your segment and lends flexibility to dynamically created ad units through platform templates or existing creative you have. Bids, targeting, formats, sizing, and other elements can further refine campaigns as the best audience is identified and targeted.

That's the essence of implementing a targeted campaign. The level of control and the level of effort required by a brand will be dictated by their platform. These can vary significantly, but one constant should always be the ability to target users on any screen with any programmatic purchasing method.

Targeting across every screen is required because it allows brands to target users wherever they are, instead of restricting audience options. Display, video, and mobile all play a role and platforms shouldn't limit a brand's display capabilities. Again, HTML5 creation can help with this targeting because it allows for reach across all screens and facilitates creation in multiple sizes.

Travel is a true real-time product. An airline seat can be bought from anywhere in the world at any time. If it's bought, it's gone; if it's not, then it's still available. To capitalize on this real-time inventory within a complex business cycle, ads and units purchased need to have the flexibility to reach customers at the moment of opportunity. They should also be used to promote and target customers with timed offers, which have been shown to increase conversion rates, particularly when they are highly relevant to the consumer.

3.7 Step 5: Measure and Review

Brand and campaign measurement must be inserted into the programmatic buying process and feedback loop to improve overall success. The chief difference for programmatic in this realm is that measurement and adjustment can happen extremely quickly.

Programmatic buying and display are based on real-time information and software also has the capability to determine real-time feedback and insight to improve every impression. Good platforms will build a feedback loop into their operations so every impression helps improve the next. Reports with valid insights can be set to run for weeks or days in slower cycles or even hourly during large campaigns.

Feedback is real-time and adjusting bids based on that feedback can be automated as well in many systems. There are a few important elements that you and your platform should check. First off is that the ad is viewable, using the IAB standard.

"Viewability is scored when at least 50% of an ad is on the screen for at least 1 second. That's a low benchmark, but even with that, over 50% of all ads don't fit," said Elliot Pritchard, CMO of TravelRepublic, speaking about viewability across all Internet ads.

Other elements to consider are audience composition and overall reach, ensuring they align with your goals. Brand lift has become another real-time measure with the inclusion of real-time click data and integrated surveys. Some of these measures are a brand's best opportunity to understand where to improve.

Final reviews should also take attribution models into account. Look at the touchpoints for campaign success and failures and related ad unit data. This can help a brand determine what touchpoints didn't propel audience members down the funnel and which touchpoints were the best at getting audience segments to act.

The real-time access that is at the heart of programmatic is also at the heart of its measurement. That means a brand may spend more on campaigns and need a core focus to turn that incremental spend into successful targeting.

People spend 20 to 30 days to make a travel purchase decision and consumer intention is the biggest data signal; it trumps everything else. Programmatic platforms give advertisers the tools to track users along these long paths and look for intent. When intent is found, the brand can bid on those units and reach a customer at the moment they most want to buy.

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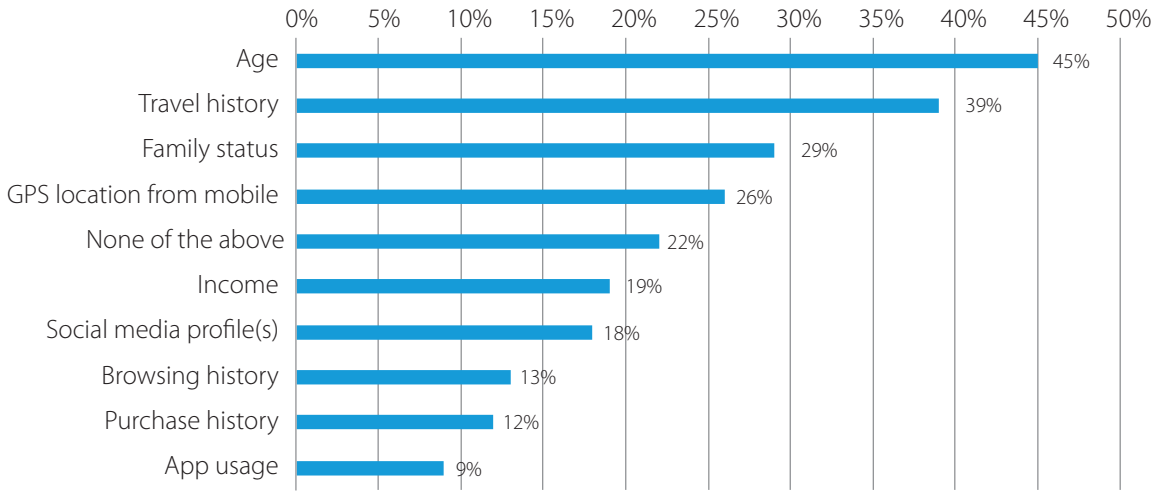
Personalization Opportunities Within Programmatic Advertising

Figure 12: What Will Consumers Provide for Deals and Recommendations?



Source: EyeforTravel, 2015b

Travelers want a personal experience when they take a vacation. Personal preferences guide every choice and make each trip unique. That means travelers are expecting to be treated like individuals at every step of the purchasing process. At least 40% of travelers are even willing to share their data in order to get targeted advertisements and offers (Amadeus, 2013).

Brands that put effort into personalization improve their success of conversions throughout the customer research process and buyer's journey. Personalization also gives brands an easy way to differentiate themselves, but it all comes down to the creative itself.

Dynamic, tailored ads can resonate with consumers and increase engagement by 50% plus double interaction rates among viewers (Kalapesi, 2014).

4.1 Creative Personalization

Personalization is very important in the travel space because every decision is multifaceted and two consumers looking at the same rental, flight, or excursion may react differently to the same message. Learning who each person is and matching content to their interests and values can improve conversion rates, but it is a data-intensive process.

The traditional way brands would perform creative personalization in travel – before programmatic – was by creating multiple versions of a single ad. Marketers then created multiple segments to show a specific piece of pre-built content at a certain time of day, a certain part of the country, or another broad set of characteristics.

"It was very inefficient and not the best way to optimize it," said Beri. "What creative personalization does is allow you to make a very manual tasks more efficient and

> *"What creative personalization does is allow you to make a very manual tasks more efficient and takes the guesswork out of optimizing creative performance. You're algorithmically deciding what works"*
>
> **Raj Beri, COO, Adadyn**

takes the guesswork out of optimizing creative performance. You're algorithmically deciding what works."

Creative personalization takes multiple units of ad copy, formats, imagery, and calls-to-action and combines them in a way that's designed to successfully reach customers. The marketer will initially assign demographics and other data to each element, but the platform will test combinations to see what performs best. This allows incremental improvements every time an ad is served.

Powerful platforms can take hundreds of components and craft the best possible ad each time. Travel brands' in-house teams generate each component separately instead of creating the hundreds of possible combinations in all of the ad formats and sizes that could be purchased.

Platform vendors who provide creative personalization have noted that brands can see conversion rates closer to what they would expect with search, but highly targeted customers can prove more valuable in the long run.

"We very much recommend that companies run dynamic, custom ads where possible," said Clapson.

4.2 True 1:1 Marketing

Strong programmatic platforms allow marketers to move past segmentation to learn more about and target individual users. Many brands are able to experience true 1:1 marketing situations when they combine programmatic with creative personalization.

Through large amounts of aggregated data and real-time information, programmatic systems can identify and reach out to a customer while they are on a relevant domain. Personalization software then looks at the individual being targeted and segments them as best as possible, delivering a piece of content that appeals to them across as many characteristics as possible.

"There's so much choice for the guests. It's great and it's overwhelming. The more that we as marketers can provide relevant suggestions to guests, the more they'll appreciate us. That's the positive story we're all looking forward to in the years to come," said Ho.

Travel brands can find someone in the Midwest looking for a hotel in California and then deliver very specific creative based on what they know about the customer and what they know is performing well based on the other millions of impressions that have been shown. Additional data can help a travel brand refine the message, such as ticket vendor promoting Disneyland packages versus late-night music festivals.

"Whether brands are looking to drive clicks or bookings, creative personalization definitely creates an uptick in conversion rates," Beri noted.

> *"Whether brands are looking to drive clicks or bookings, creative personalization definitely creates an uptick in conversion rates"*
>
> **Raj Beri, COO, Adadyn**

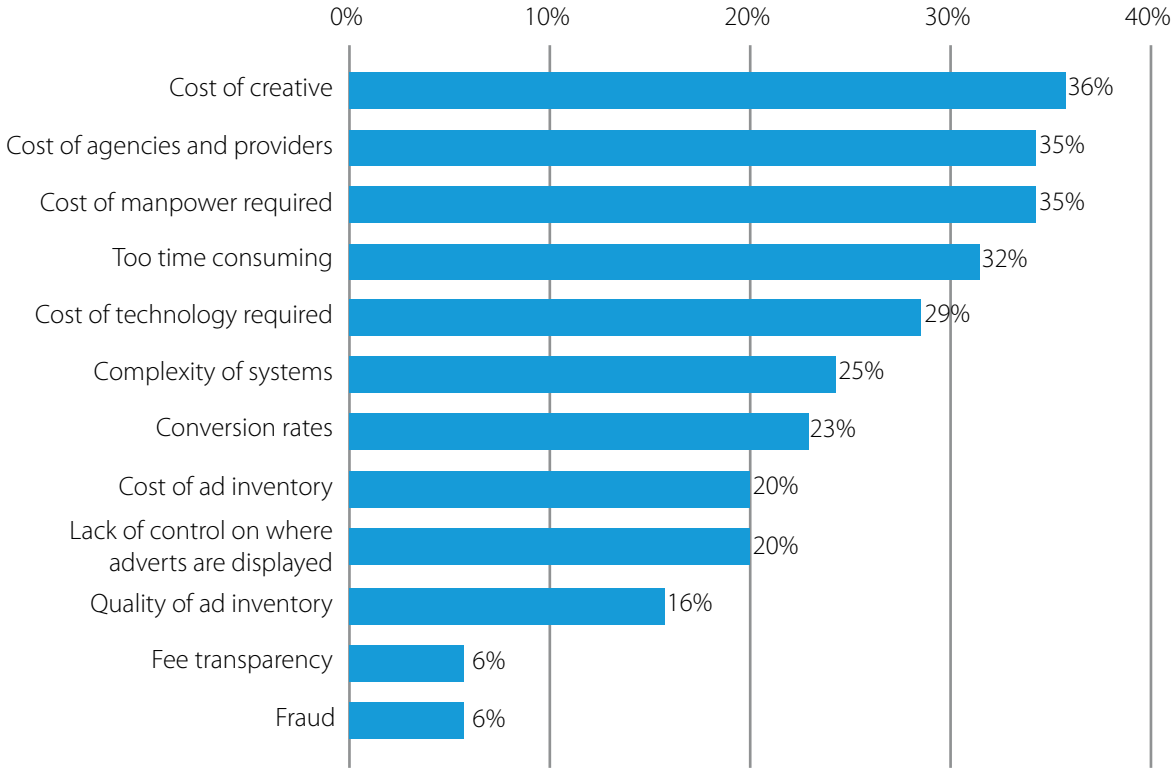
4.3 Retargeting for Greater Success

The 1:1 approach becomes even more useful when it is done for cross-sell and upsell opportunities. Platforms can allow brands to retarget previous prospects with new creative and pitches to prompt an additional purchase. Platforms know what the user has seen and can automatically shift to a new, personalized ad unit to avoid having the consumer ignore the repeated message.

"The challenge we all have to deal with is what signals can we get from a customer's behavior and our data to see if we should keep going with retargeting or if we should stop because they've left the market?" Said Ho.

Travel customers move through a series of stages from dreaming and influence to specific research, decision making, and purchasing. Each stage can be leveraged

Figure 13: What Issues Are Stopping Firms Adopting Programmatic?



Source: EyeforTravel, 2015a. 69 respondents

by travel brands to deliver optimized creative. Elements can be further personalized during retargeting, allowing brands to create a stronger message that continues to appeal to the specific user's interests.

Retargeting data also needs to be collected and reviewed outside of the programmatic or other ad platforms brands use. "Don't just trust people. Always have a look at the data yourselves," says Pritchard.

> *"We're constantly trying to figure out the cadence of people's travel. We need to learn where they want to go and why"*
>
> **Gordon Ho, SVP of Global Marketing and North America Sales, Princess Cruises**

4.4 Test and Learn

Experts in the field note that a test-and-learn philosophy works best when combining programmatic with personalization. "We're constantly trying to figure out the cadence of people's travel. We need to learn where they want to go and why," said Ho.

Creative personalization needs a targeted campaign that is specific, has a decent duration, a good base, and fixed, pre-set variables.

One way to start is to restrict a personalized creative campaign to a single geographic location and targeted season. Travel brands will have a baseline for how ads are performing before the personalization. By restricting the number of variables that change when content is personalized, brands will be able to hone in on what is making the most difference.

Like programmatic campaigns in general, those using creative personalization are most manageable and beneficial when elements are kept simple. Brands should leverage tools to be able to understand

improvements and what is working in a matter of days as opposed to weeks.

"The biggest challenge for us is trying to make sure that you have content to serve people in the moment," said Harris. "Creative teams can only create a certain amount of ads, so that will naturally limit the personalization they can execute."

That is a concern shared by many in the travel space, with more than a third of brands surveyed by EyeforTravel saying the cost of creative and the supporting manpower are major concerns preventing adoption of programmatic (see Figure 13).

4.5 Data Convergence and Tracking 101

Personalization relies on the data previously noted. Travel brands need to utilize their own resources but also consider additional sets made available through third-party and first-party sources. Consumers must be identified and tracked to have data available for creative, and that tracking takes a few different forms.

4.5.1 Cookie Tracking

Creatives can leverage cookies to determine recent interest on a site and focus on demand fulfillment or cross-sell opportunities. When carts are abandoned, creative can be optimized to redirect users to those packages or products as well.

Cookie syncing has begun in earnest, and more platforms are providing access to these networks. With syncing, multiple tracking platforms create IDs to identify specific devices and individuals, sharing all of this information to build a complete profile without the normal cookie requirements. These advanced cookie systems can also be stored in multiple locations, so that they can replicate and create redundancy in the event that some are deleted (Hill, 2015).

4.5.2 Mobile Tracking

Advanced systems are starting to track us across multiple devices by looking for patterns in access. When two devices – say your smartphone and laptop – access the same websites via the same networks, ID systems begin to link the two. As connections grow, the profile link grows stronger and platforms associate the two devices with a single user.

This pairing not only allows systems to determine users that are in the same household, but it helps to tell them apart even when sharing a device such as the home PC.

Mobile consumers are tracked by pairing this advanced information with more common tools such as looking at access on mobile websites, mobile apps, information provided by the device when loading content. A common method of this initial identification is using Google Analytics to assign a unique identifier to a user.

Apple tried to simplify the process with a Unique Device ID (UDID) that lets ad servers create a digital fingerprint of the user based on the device. The UDID operated across apps and browsers, but privacy concerns shut it down. It's been replaced by the ID For Advertisers (IDFA) that included opt-out capabilities and the ability to be reset. The Android counterpart is the Google Advertising ID (AID) that includes support for individual users on a single device – typically a tablet – based on browsing habits, logins, and more.

"The good news here is that the right thing to do for the data is the right thing to do for the customer. The more we can allow customers to move between channels, the better we can tie up the data as well," said Pritchard.

> *"The right thing to do for the data is the right thing to do for the customer"*
>
> **Elliot Pritchard, CMO, TravelRepublic**

4.5.3 Facebook Exchange and Social

FBX has brought RTB to social media and requires a little additional effort. It can provide tracking and support across devices and channels, but is designed to best work with demand fulfillment to ensure interest turns into sales (Smith, 2014). The company provides its own consumer profiles with cookies, data gathered from unified logins, and other interactions to bolster any first-party data a travel brand may have.

The FBX is a potentially dominant partner because the exchange itself is simple to use and Facebook has a wealth of consumer information. As more sites use Facebook data for login information, the amount of data it controls will only continue to grow.

While social isn't a significant focus yet, Facebook data presents a clear path forward.

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4.6 Reaching Your Audience

"Very few people are combining multiple sets of data to optimize creative throughout the funnel today. But, there is definitely the capacity to do it right now," noted Clapson.

> *"Very few people are combining multiple sets of data to optimize creative throughout the funnel today. But, there is definitely the capacity to do it right now"*
>
> **Kevin Clapson, Vice President of Display Advertising EMEA, TripAdvisor**

These sources can provide all of the data that a travel brand needs to identify and reach target audiences. Content personalization platforms are able to pair all of this data with RTB to determine targets, make affordable bids, and deliver creative specifically designed to perform well based on all of the target's metrics.

"Cross-device shopping is here to stay," said Isernhagen. "Since it's here, we have to adapt ourselves to it. This means retargeting has great potential to be ROI positive. If you're not doing it, definitely start doing it."

Travel brands have a significant opportunity with content personalization. Success will come from strong partnerships, the ability to follow data-driven insight, and a thorough understanding of what data and KPI drive business successes.

"There's so much more personalization that we can and should be doing as an industry. It's about recognizing how to use the data that's out there to help us deliver much richer creative that's much more meaningful to the visitor," said Ho.

"We've just scratched the surface."

> *"There's so much more personalization that we can and should be doing as an industry .... We've just scratched the surface"*
>
> **Gordon Ho, SVP of Global Marketing and North America Sales, Princess Cruises**

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Conclusion

Since the dawn of the digital ad, travel brands have always relied heavily on search engine ads tied to keywords where they hoped consumer intent was visible. Brands pushed as much content as possible to see what worked, while they turned to display advertising to create overall brand awareness.

Programmatic has emerged as the next step. It's ability to reach interested parties gives smaller brands, which cannot compete on keyword targeting because of costs, access to interested consumers. "People love the planning of travel, the experience, and reliving those memories. The more we can provide relevant information to help in the dream, planning, and enjoyment states, the better experience we create and the more helpful customers see us," said Ho.

The initial hurdles of understanding options, bidding, and optimization in real-time are now being handled by smart platforms. Programmatic relies on the existing targeting parameters that marketers know from search and applying them to display. Even cost barriers are being removed.

Travel brands can turn to programmatic platforms and rely on the maker to bring in relationships with new ad exchanges and integrate with other business software.

Any analyst or marketer capable of running a search campaign can now run programmatic and see strong results now that the integration headache and platform support have been handled. Creative personalization has come in as a step above programmatic's capabilities. As brands adopt it, they start to see conversion rates that get closer to what they might expect with search.

"Travel is going to get more demanding as people need to reach audiences and get more conversions across an increasingly fragmented ecosystem," said Kiran Gopinath, CEO of Adadyn. "Programmatic to a large extent brings the fragmented world together and provides scale at an affordable cost."

The key for travel brands to see significant success is to understand how to link campaigns to performance goals. Platforms can handle the complexity and perform the heavy lifting, but it is up to business units to ensure that they're traveling on the right path to meet customers willing to make a purchase.

"Travel is going to get more demanding as people need to reach audiences and get more conversions across an increasingly fragmented ecosystem," said Kiran Gopinath, CEO of Adadyn. "Programmatic to a large extent brings the fragmented world together and provides scale at an affordable cost"

Kiran Gopinath, CEO, Adadyn

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Acronyms

AAID	Google Advertising ID
CPA	Cost Per Acquisition
CPM	Cost Per Thousand
DSP	Demand-Side-Platforms
FBX	Facebook Exchange
IAB	Internet Advertising Bureau
IDFA	ID For Advertisers
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
ROI	Return on Investment
RTB	Real-Time Bidding
UDID	Unique Device ID
UDID	Unique Device ID

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About Adadyn

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Adadyn removes the barrier of entry into programmatic advertising, making it simple and affordable for travel marketers and agencies of all sizes to get started without up-front fees or minimum spend requirements. By unifying media buying, dynamic creative and audience management into one easy-to-use platform, now anyone can launch a campaign and achieve programmatic display advertising performance on both a self-service or managed services basis. With offices in California, New York, India and Singapore, Adadyn offers around-the-clock customer support and global reach. For more information, visit www.adadyn.com or follow @adadyn on Twitter.

About EyeforTravel

EyeforTravel is a community where the world's top online travel brands – from hotels to airlines, online travel agents, cruise, car hire firms and more – come to meet to drive forward growth and innovation in the industry.

We know that working in the turbulent online travel industry is as exciting as it is challenging. In this constantly evolving market place, we appreciate that keeping up with the pace of change can be tough, not to mention time consuming. You need the right information, contacts and strategic insight to succeed.

Established in 1997, by Tim Gunstone, we offer a diverse product portfolio including industry analysis, insights, research, webinars, reports and conferences to suit the needs of our clients.

Our clients read as a who's who of online travel. From major hotel brands to new startups, we help our 80,000 strong customer base make better decisions, build better brands, close the most lucrative deals and ultimately sell more of their product. After all, increasing travel brand profit margins in the cutthroat travel industry is the name of the game!

No other online travel intelligence provider has been charting the growth of online travel as long as we have. We were here at the inception of online travel and we know the industry inside out. What's more, we're a small, friendly team. Forget impersonal hierarchies, we like to get to know our customers and work towards their exact needs.