2022 Digital Advertising Trends: A Top 10 List for Publishers
The media industry is entering a new phase of evolution yet again as the world begins to reopen, thanks to increasing COVID-19 vaccination coverage. Global advertising spend rose by 24% in 2021, the strongest year-over-year growth on record in 40 years, according to the World Advertising Research Center (WARC). Ad spend is expected to grow by another 12.5% in 2022. This is positive news for publishers. However, new opportunities bring new challenges.

Publishers and advertisers alike must consider how to capture and hold on to their audiences’ attention in 2022 as society begins to shift to a new normal. Technology will continue to play a central role in media organizations’ success in this area. Modern media solutions will enable greater collaboration between teams and provide better data as those in the industry work to innovate and leverage new digital advertising trends.

In this white paper, we’ll explore various aspects of digital advertising, which accounted for 65% of total worldwide ad spend in 2021. We’ll cover personalization, live chat, online events and communities, and social media trends. We’ll also dive into hyperlocalization, contextual targeting, and programmatic, native, and interactive advertising. We’ll even dip our toes into the metaverse.

There is good reason for publishers to be excited about the year ahead. Gaining insight into the digital advertising trends that will shape the next 12 months is a critical step in ensuring your company is prosperous in 2022.
Top 10 Digital Advertising Trends for 2022

1. Personalization will become more advanced across all platforms
2. Live chat and virtual selling assistants will become mainstream
3. Online events and communities will be crucial to reaching customers
4. Social media will engage users in the digital advertising experience
5. Hyperlocal advertising will become more prevalent
6. The death of third-party cookies will drive the resurgence of contextual advertising
7. Programmatic advertising will increase across all devices
8. Native advertising will lead to more discussions about consumer trust
9. Interactive advertising will drive connections between audiences and brands
10. The metaverse will see more companies stake claims on digital space
Media organizations should expect to see an increase in personalization in 2022 in the areas of both digital advertising and marketing. Streaming giant Netflix continued to fine-tune its personalization strategy in 2021, and it’s only going to get better from here on out.

Competitors like Amazon Prime and Apple will likely make similar enhancements to personalization on their platforms as people continue to regularly stream movies and TV shows at home. This is especially relevant considering some platforms are showing films also playing on the big screen, but for a better deal than you’d get at the cinema.

“For brands to stand out in the market in 2022, they’re going to need to be all about personalization. I’ve seen an increase in it myself. I’ve been served personalized perfume ads using my name while streaming.”

said Lisa Levine, Digital Consultant at Lineup Systems.

Consumer goods providers are also stepping up their personalization efforts. The objective? To keep pace with the kind of experience customers expect thanks to Big Tech. Three quarters of consumers and companies alike agree that “personalization is now table stakes,” according to a recent study by Twilio Segment.

How can publishers harness the power of personalization in their businesses? First, you need to establish a robust (and clean) set of first-party consumer data. Second, you must invest in technology that allows you to use that data to create hyper-personalized editorial content, subscription offerings, and advertising packages.
2. Live chat and virtual selling assistants will become mainstream

The pandemic forced companies in nearly every industry to rethink how they engage with their customers, and the use of chatbots has grown as a result. However, demand for this kind of service was on the rise even before the public health crisis. In an instant-gratification world, consumers want to be able to connect with businesses anytime, anywhere.

In 2021, chatbots were used across myriad sectors including government, banking, healthcare, consumer goods, and more. The technology will become even more widespread in 2022. We’ll likely also see an increase in virtual selling assistants, which are an extension of chatbots. Having online assistants available to chat 24 hours a day removes the need to book an appointment and speak to someone in person to conduct business.

In addition, retail spending via chat is expected to hit $142 billion by 2024, a huge jump from $2.8 billion in 2019. How does this work? Virtual selling assistants like the one used by beauty brand Sephora make personalized recommendations to customers via chat and shoppers can even make purchases directly in the chat.

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Savvy publishers are well aware of the importance of leveraging self-service technology to improve customer experience for advertisers and audiences. Chatbots take this concept a step further from self-service to self-service with support. Media organizations would be wise to incorporate chatbots into both their marketing and sales strategies in 2022.
Virtual events and interactive digital communities are here to stay, even as the world starts to slowly reopen. In 2021, we saw an increase in online events from brands across various industries. From 2020 to 2027, the virtual event sector is expected to achieve a compound annual growth rate of 23.2%, according to MarketingTech.

Even brands that do return to hosting in-person events will likely also offer an online component, because virtual events help companies build interactive communities around a common interest. Building these communities will keep audiences engaged in your offerings. Online events also present an excellent advertising opportunity, which publishers can harness by partnering with event organizers.

“There is an opportunity for brands to create private spaces of their own, where brand trust and engagement become more of a two-way street,” suggested WARC writer Gabey Goh in a 2021 opinion piece. “Additionally, micro- and nano-influencers continue to be a valuable bridge between brands and audiences. Their audiences may be smaller than others, but they are highly engaged and trust brand recommendations from these personalities.”

In addition to virtual events, publishers should keep their eye on the trend of private online communities. Backlash against social media giants like Facebook and Twitter has spurred many internet users to connect with one another in different ways—for example, in private Slack channels. Private online communities do pose a challenge for publishers and advertisers from a data collection perspective. However, you can still gain value from these communities if you get creative about interacting with your audience.
4. Social media will engage users in the digital advertising experience

Brands are finally getting social on social media. It’s more common nowadays than ever before to see Instagram Stories inviting you to answer a poll, enter a competition, or swipe up to receive a discount or exclusive offer only available through the story.

Social media is changing the way digital advertising will work in 2022, and driving engagement with Instagram Stories is just one component. Interactive social media advertising also enables brands to showcase their personality versus simply publishing a promoted post. This creates loyalty by making digital advertising a two-way conversation.

Instagram isn’t the only social media heavyweight driving audience engagement through creative forms of advertising. YouTube now offers an omnichannel experience in the form of “a shoppable TV screen” for Connected TV (CTV) viewers. This is notable considering that CTV and over-the-top TV (OTT) will be dominant players in the advertising market in 2022.

“For the first time, performance advertisers can take advantage of YouTube on CTV to drive and measure conversions,” said this October 2021 announcement from Google. “When a viewer sees a video action campaign on their TV, they are invited through a URL at the bottom of their screen to continue shopping on the brand’s website from their desktop or mobile device—without interrupting their viewing session.”

LinkedIn has also made digital advertising interactive by rolling out conversation ads, which became available in 2020. These ads offer a “choose your own adventure” experience with customized calls to action and can only be sent to users when they’re active on the platform, driving real-time engagement. All of these developments signal that publishers should explore ways to spark two-way conversations with their audiences through social media advertising.
5. Hyperlocal advertising will become more prevalent

Today, geotargeted advertising is easier than ever before with smartphones, and it can be highly personalized. Have you ever wondered if your phone is listening to you? This is actually clever tracking technology based on location and timing. Publishers should expect to see an increase in the use of this technology to serve hyper-local ads to audiences in 2022 as people continue to work from home and support their local businesses.

“In the U.K., we had a nationwide campaign encouraging us to shop local for Christmas in 2021. I also saw a sponsored social media post from a local craft shop suggesting I do my holiday shopping with them, and that Amazon would be alright without my business,” said Lisa.

Many publishers have already shown extraordinary support for local businesses since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuing to find and offer ways to connect advertisers and audiences in the same area—right down to the neighborhood—is a smart strategy to pursue in 2022. This is especially true considering that 75% of consumers plan to increase their spending at local businesses after the pandemic, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

“COVID-changed consumers are also seeking out products with a patina of authenticity and an artisan feel, according to Accenture findings,” reported the Chamber.

To thrive in 2022, publishers must align with consumers’ values and spotlight local businesses in both their editorial and advertising content. Consider ways you can integrate local content into your subscription and event offerings, and remember to get your recommendations straight from the source—your customers.
6. The death of third-party cookies will drive the resurgence of contextual advertising

Google's pledge to remove third-party cookies from its Chrome browser in late 2023 (previously scheduled for January 2022) will have a huge impact on brands that rely on third-party cookies to target users with advertising. This change will see publishers relying heavily on their own first-party data and the resurgence of contextual targeting (matching ad content to relevant web pages as opposed to users based on third-party data) to build their desired audiences.

Media organizations around the globe will need to adjust their business models to adapt to a cookieless future. Many have already begun this work. In our recent report with Adweek Branded, a subsidiary of Adweek, we surveyed more than 100 sell-side digital advertising executives about how their companies are responding to the death of third-party cookies. The report, “Are publishers ready for the post-cookie future? What the sell side will look like,” explores the opportunities to leverage first-party data, as well as the challenges associated with gathering and using this data.

While 84% of publishers believe they need to refine their contextual targeting strategies, 70% see the death of third-party cookies as beneficial to their businesses, according to the Adweek report. In addition, 65% of publishers already have a plan to expand their first-party data and 45% have already begun to change their advertising strategies.

Modern technology will be key in enabling publishers to navigate a cookieless future. Ninety percent of media organizations are currently using or evaluating new tech to help them with targeting, and 65% are using or evaluating tech to aid in data monetization.
Streaming giant Spotify scaled up its programmatic advertising offerings in 2021 as podcasts continued to make waves in the industry. Programmatic audio advertising automates ad placement into content such as podcasts with pre-configured messages that require no need for manual intervention. The Spotify Audience Network enables advertisers to reach audiences across multiple channels, including Spotify Originals and Exclusives, plus podcasts created with Anchor or Megaphone.

The appetite for podcasts in the U.S. has increased by 17% since 2020 (and by nearly double since 2017), with 27% of Americans tuning into the streaming medium in 2021, according to Edison Research. In addition, revenue from podcast advertising is estimated to double from $1 billion in 2021 to $2 billion in 2022. Clearly, podcast advertising is a strategy worth considering for publishers and advertisers alike.

Growth in podcast listenership isn’t the only thing shaping the future of programmatic advertising. As 5G technology rolls out, mobile video viewing is expected to increase, which will drive demand for programmatic video ads. Video ads are also getting shorter, which not only makes them more appealing to audiences, but also to publishers who can run more ads in a single slot on YouTube, for example, due to programmatic technology. As a result, programmatic display ad spend is expected to grow to nearly $100 billion in 2022, according to eMarketer. Publishers and advertisers will want to consider their own budgets in light of this trend.
The ambiguous nature of native advertising has ruffled feathers among consumers for years. The reason is that ads that look “native” to a web page make it more difficult for audiences to distinguish what is advertising and what is not. This is especially problematic considering that in today’s fake news era, audiences are more skeptical than ever before about whether they can trust media and brands alike.

“Without a trusted leadership source to look to, people don’t know where or who to get reliable information [from]. The global infodemic has driven trust in all news sources to record lows with social media (35%) and owned media (41%) the least trusted; [and] traditional media (53%) saw the largest drop in trust at eight points globally,” according to the 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer.

Publishers should not take this information lightly, and should carefully consider how their native advertising strategies may impact audience trust in 2022. Partnering with brands that share your audiences’ values is one way to foster trust. This is especially important as consumers become more concerned about corporate ethics in the wake of recent scandals such as the Facebook whistle blower scandal.

Including user-generated content (UGC) in your native ads is another way to boost trust among your audience. Another bonus to this approach is that ads featuring UGC yield click-through rates 4 times higher than ads than their non-UGC counterparts.
9. Interactive advertising will drive connections between audiences and brands

Just as advertisers grappled with how to engage Millennials when their generation gained buying power, Generation Z is now prompting the same questions. More than 80% of Gen Z internet users ignore or skip ads, which means advertisers need to get creative about capturing their attention. Enter interactive content. The travel industry is one particular area where interactive visual experiences have always performed well with audiences. It’s also an industry ripe for a comeback.

“Consumers want and expect more authentic ad experiences across the board, and those expectations apply to marketers in the travel industry as well,” reported Ad Age. “While people will be looking for the best deals, they want to be served those offers on their own terms. They want ad experiences that are complementary to their online journey rather than invasive or disruptive.”

Beyond the travel industry, interactive content is all over the internet in nearly every sector. Questionnaires and polls have become increasingly popular ways of connecting with audiences and encouraging them to provide feedback, which in turn helps them feel valued. Another highly engaging format is “choose your own adventure” advertising like the kind launched by NBCUniversal in May 2021.

“Officially dubbed “Choose Your Destiny,” the format will use features like social voting to let viewers determine the next installment of a brand’s creative for an upcoming linear pod, or branded content experiences that let consumers choose the narrative,” reported Fierce Video.

Interactive content is engaging and memorable. People like it because it helps them feel a connection to the brand sharing the content, and it’s far more engaging than a static ad. As a publisher, you should prepare to see—and produce—more of this kind of content in 2022.
10. The metaverse will see more companies stake claims on digital space

Silicon Valley has been buzzing with talk of the metaverse for months. However, Facebook’s October 2021 announcement of the company’s name change to Meta has ignited even greater interest in the concept of the metaverse. Not exactly sure what this futuristic term refers to? WIRED breaks it down well:

“Broadly speaking, the technologies that make up the metaverse can include virtual reality (VR)—characterized by persistent virtual worlds that continue to exist even when you’re not playing—as well as augmented reality (AR) that combines aspects of the digital and physical worlds,” said the publication. “It also translates to a digital economy, where users can create, buy, and sell goods. And, in the more idealistic visions of the metaverse, it’s interoperable, allowing you to take virtual items like clothes or cars from one platform to another.”

It’s likely that in 2022, publishers and advertisers alike will begin dipping their toes into the metaverse and exploring the opportunities it could offer their companies. For example, some brands may create ecosystems designed as community spaces, but that also function as spaces to advertise products and services. One such space is “virtual world” website The Sandbox where users can attend concerts and play games. A New-York based metaverse real estate investing firm recently purchased $4.3 million in digital land on the platform.

As digital advertising tactics—and the digital spaces where brands advertise—continue to evolve, publishers must remain agile and stay up to date with the latest trends while avoiding passing fads.
Lineup Systems is a leading global provider of media sales technology. Its cloud-based system, Adpoint, is a true end-to-end omnichannel sales and advertising solution for media companies who are keen to streamline their operations, make better use of their data, and boost their sales revenues for faster growth. In 2021, Lineup Systems launched Amplio, a ground-breaking subscription revenue management and monetization system that’s ushering in a new era for subscription acquisition and management.

For more information or get in touch, visit lineup.com.
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