



An Inside Look at 100 Million Digital Ads Used to Drive Attendance

**Timely, relevant digital marketing insights for organizers of
trade and consumer shows, exhibitions and other live events.**

ENCORE MEDIA PARTNERS

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INTRODUCTION >>

The pandemic significantly affected global digital spend last year but the momentum has resumed and digital ad spend is expected to reach record levels in 2021!

An explosion in online video, OTT/CTV and digital audio consumption. Continued growth in time spent online, especially with mobile. More DOOH displays, data activation solutions and programmatic buying tools. New rich media ad units. The latest digital trends, media and technologies offer exciting and powerful opportunities for event marketers.

There are also challenges, especially the changing privacy landscape and inevitable phase-out of third-party cookies. This means BIG CHANGES to online advertising, including retargeting, a tactic widely used by show organizers. Start evolving your strategy now so you are prepared for a third-party cookie-less world and avoid a major disruption to your visitor marketing.

We analyzed more than 100 million digital ads that we purchased using traditional and programmatic tools across the world for trade and consumer shows, exhibitions and other live events so that we can provide the best guidance to our clients – and we share ten insights with you along with practical tips.

We hope you enjoy our white paper and find some of the ideas helpful in driving attendance and maximizing value for your exhibitors and sponsors.

TARGETING



On average, attendee acquisition campaigns run by Encore employed six different types of online targeting, with campaigns often combining targeting methods.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: Consider the full range of targeting options to maximize attendance, including retargeting, social, interest, demographic, location/geofencing, contextual, placement, lookalike, CRM and search.

MOBILE DEVICES



More than 60% of impressions we purchased globally for exhibitions and events were on mobile devices – a clear reflection of the increasing time spent with mobile media.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: This shift in usage requires event marketers to rethink media buying, creative assets, landing pages, etc. to maximize ad spend.

PROGRAMMATIC / RETARGETING



Programmatic ads represented most of the digital display spend we handled for show organizers with media weight shifting from retargeting to other targeting tactics.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: Do not overspend on retargeting as you will miss potential attendees. Allocate spend across the marketing funnel to fill your pipeline with new attendee prospects too. If you use retargeting and other online advertising which relies on third-party cookies, start thinking beyond this type of cookie targeting so you can embrace the changing privacy landscape and do not have a big hole in your visitor marketing plan in the post third-party cookie world.

ONLINE VIDEO



Online video has been the fastest growing format for event marketers we serve, and shorter format videos are on the rise.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: No doubt you have heard it before...people's attention spans have been getting shorter. To get the most out of your video, do not make it any longer than it needs to be to tell your story. Frontload key points and pursue a visual-first strategy i.e. make sure your message gets across even when sound is turned off.

OVER-THE-TOP (OTT)



Linear is still the dominant form of TV advertising for Encore clients but we are increasing OTT spend for specific visitor marketing applications.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: Use OTT for incremental reach, more weight against high-value target audiences and granular geotargeting not available with traditional linear TV.

DATA ACTIVATION



The digital advertising campaigns we run are using more data than ever before, and shows are activating data for an increasing number of use cases.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: Maximize first-party data to mitigate loss of third-party cookies. Activate data for ad spend allocation, audience segmentation and targeting, geofencing, bid optimization, creative asset development, analytics and attribution to enhance attendee acquisition campaigns. Follow best practices regarding the collection and use of data.

DIGITAL-OUT-OF-HOME (DOOH)



While we still buy numerous traditional out-of-home (OOH) displays, digital signage represents the majority of our OOH media spend tasked for driving attendance.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: Digital is growing in high-traffic density areas such as airports, highways, city centers, etc. so factor this ad inventory into your media planning. Leverage the flexibility of DOOH to update ads real-time, use countdown clocks to add urgency and run multiple creatives to focus on different event features. Consider adding interactive call-to-actions to boost engagement.

PAID SOCIAL



All event promotion campaigns used paid social, and in-feed ads generated the highest engagement rates of any digital display format we used.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: If you want to better leverage your social ad spend, deploy content which educates, entertains, curates, tells a story and addresses people's passions rather than posts which are just sales centric i.e. "register today" and "buy tickets now". The more valuable you make the content, the more likely people will engage with it and share it.

CREATIVE ASSETS



Campaigns running at high frequency levels which used multiple sets of creative assets outperformed those that used the same ads over the entire flight window.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: Refresh your creative assets to avoid ad fatigue, which occurs when people are consistently exposed to the same ad over and over. After a while, people will simply tune out and ignore your ads. A larger creative asset portfolio also enables you to communicate different messages. Mix it up a bit – and try some new messaging!

BIDDING & PRICING



Most campaigns run by Encore used multiple bidding models (CPC, CPM, etc.) and saw wide deltas in prices due to the diverse ad inventory used to drive ticket sales.

EVENT MARKETER TIP: There is no one-size-fits-all bidding strategy. If you want to pay the best prices and avoid wasting ad spend, it is essential you understand all the bidding models and ad inventory sources available to you – and then determine which ones best meet your objectives. Different purchase strategies and inventory will work best for different situations.

THANKS FOR READING OUR WHITE PAPER!

We would like to leave you with some resources for additional information you may find helpful as you develop your visitor marketing strategies.

[comScore Insights](#)

[eMarketer](#)

[Facebook Marketing IQ Insights](#)

[Interactive Advertising Bureau \(IAB\)](#)

[LinkedIn Marketing Blog](#)

[MediaPost](#)

[Nielsen Insights](#)

[Think with Google](#)

About Encore Media Partners

Encore is a visitor marketing, data strategy and media buying agency, which specializes in trade and consumer shows, exhibitions and other events. We collaborate with owners, organizers and agencies on campaigns targeting local, national and global audiences across multiple industries. Our agency has run millions of dollars of advertising across all platforms, in the largest markets and in the world's biggest media brands for our clients.

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