



The State of Programmatic Advertising 2026

Benchmarks, Trends, and Predictions at the
Intersection of Programmatic, AI, and Martech



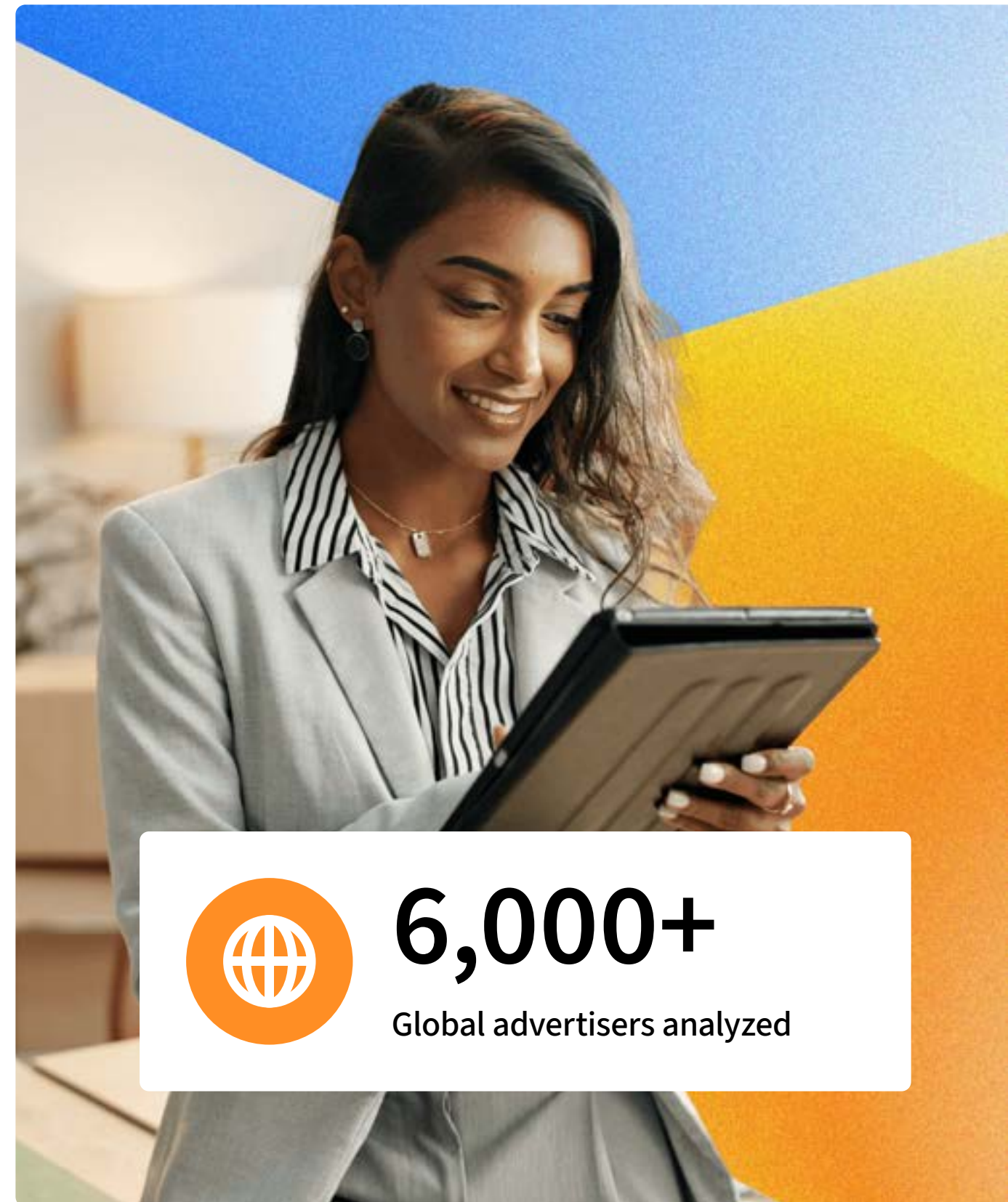
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Programmatic advertising is entering a defining transition.

Based on insights from 484 senior marketers across the US, Canada, and the UK—paired with StackAdapt’s platform data from a global sample of 6,000+ advertisers—*The State of Programmatic Advertising 2026* reveals how leading brands and agencies are evolving their strategies across the funnel, embracing AI, and rethinking their tech stacks for the year ahead.



6,000+

Global advertisers analyzed



Marketer sentiment is overwhelmingly optimistic:
75% expect budgets to grow, and 84% report stronger year-over-year (YoY) marketing performance.

But behind that optimism lies a growing maturity gap.

The industry's top performers—those reporting the strongest improvements—are separating from the pack through five clear behaviors. They are:

- 01** Unifying fragmented workflows.
- 02** Consolidating their tech stacks.
- 03** Adopting AI where it drives immediate value.
- 04** Investing earlier in emerging channels like connected TV (CTV) and digital out-of-home (DOOH).
- 05** Redefining performance through attention and creative quality.

“

The digital ecosystem continues to increase in both competitiveness and fragmentation. Brands must develop a deep understanding of how their investments are driving outcomes. Technology platforms must play their role in developing end-to-end solutions into channels and data, leveraging AI that can continuously learn how to drive incremental growth in an ever-changing environment.



Yang Han

Co-Founder and CTO at StackAdapt



INTRODUCTION AND TREND PREVIEW



This year's report highlights five trends that will shape programmatic in 2026—each paired with predictions, platform benchmarks, and execution recommendations to help marketers understand not only where the industry is heading, but what high performers are doing differently and how to take action. **Together, these insights point to a simple conclusion: the future belongs to marketers who consolidate intelligently, embrace AI pragmatically, and build creative, data, and media into one connected system.**

The Trends

Trend 1

Cross-Channel
Unification Becomes a
Performance Advantage

Trend 2

Stack Consolidation
Emerges as a Growth
Strategy

Trend 3

AI Becomes the
Intelligence Layer
Connecting Creative,
Data, and Optimization

Trend 4

Omnichannel
Ambition Outpaces
Infrastructure Maturity

Trend 5

Emerging Channels
Transition From
Experimental to
Full-Funnel



What the Top Performers* Do (And You Should Too)

Top Performer Benchmarks (vs. Lower Performers)



4X

More likely to modernize or restructure +50% of their tech stack by 2027.



65%

Say data management must be best-in-class (vs. 49%).



60%

Say personalization must be best-in-class (vs. 48%).



53%

Say consolidated tools drive ROI (vs. 31%).



38%

Say brand will drive long-term growth (vs. 25%).



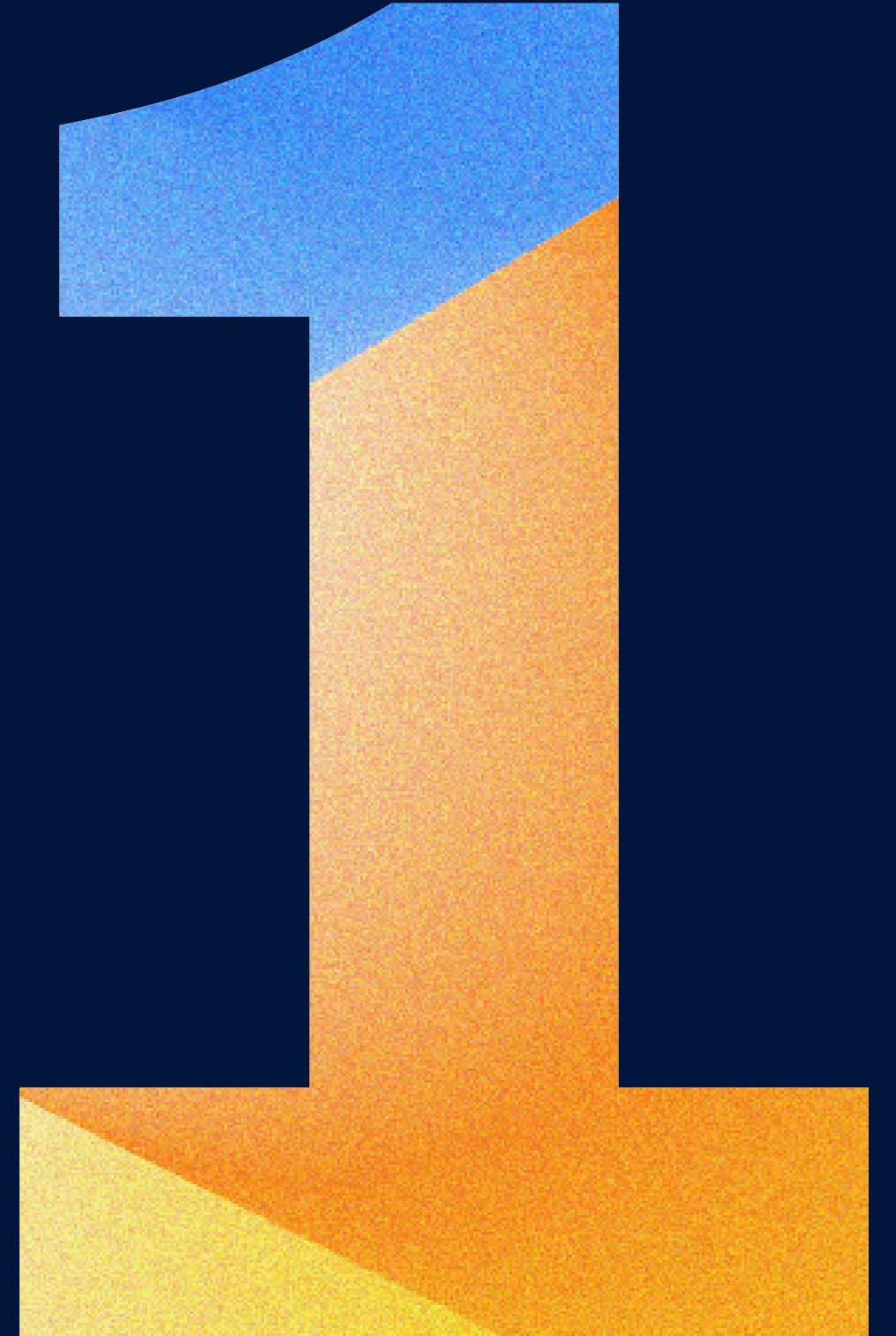
32%

Expect awareness to change the most (vs. 15%).

* Top performers are respondents who reported their marketing/advertising performance as “significantly stronger” compared to last year.

Trend 1

Cross-Channel Unification Becomes a Performance Advantage



CROSS-CHANNEL UNIFICATION BECOMES A PERFORMANCE ADVANTAGE

Two-thirds (66%) of marketers say siloed execution wastes up to 30% of their programmatic budgets. Those using omnichannel almost always report less wasted budget due to siloed or fragmented channel execution.

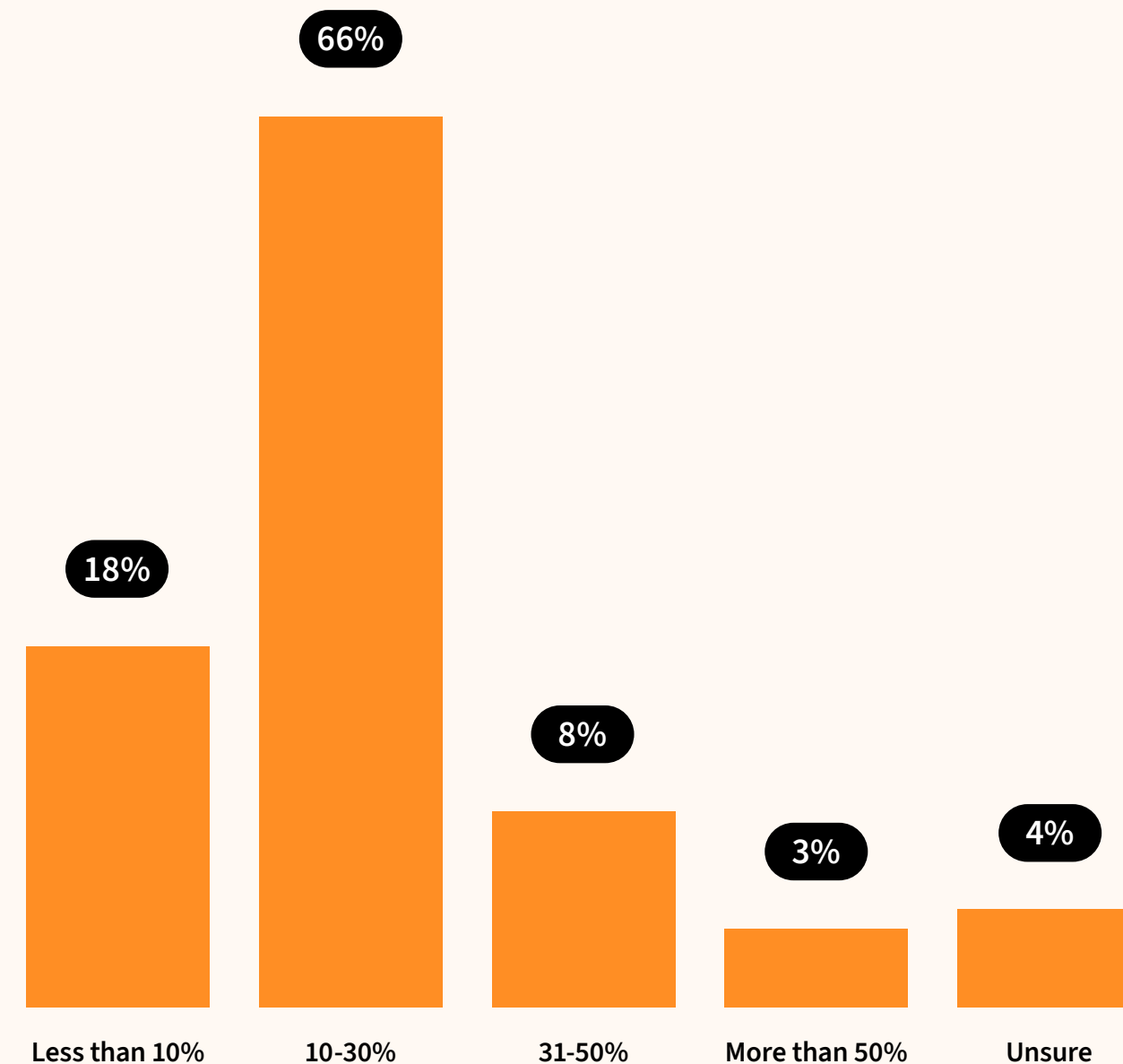
Expert Insight

“The convergence of retail media and CTV is starting to break down silos. We’re seeing unified planning between commerce/retail media signals and CTV impressions, with the likes of Amazon, Walmart, and Kroger integrating off-site programmatic with on-site shopper data. That helps create a single optimization loop from exposure to conversion.”

**Paul Verna**

Vice President of Content at EMARKETER

Siloed Channel Execution Is a Major Source of Budget Waste



Note: Based on responses to: "What percentage of your programmatic budget do you believe is wasted or underperforming because of siloed or fragmented channel execution?"

Prediction for 2026

The performance gap will widen between integrated advertisers and those managing fragmented stacks.

Multi-channel campaigns deliver +47% higher click-through rates (CTRs) than single-channel campaigns among expert-tier advertisers (those with the highest adoption of StackAdapt's targeting, creative, and measurement capabilities).

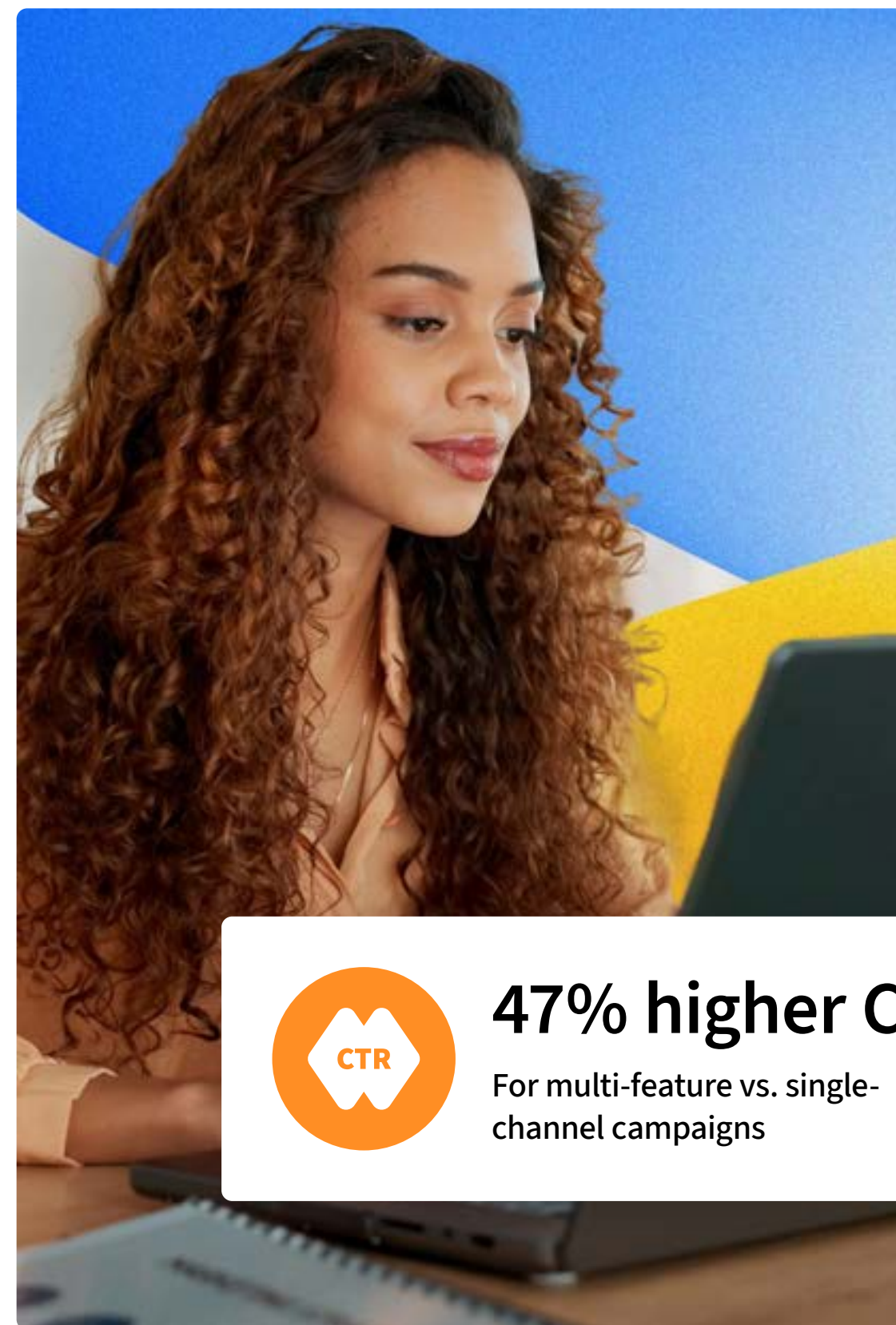
Advertisers at this maturity level are also more likely to run 5+ channels, signalling that advanced feature adoption unlocks true multi-channel performance.¹

Cross-channel attribution (CCA) is surging among small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) and mid-market advertisers (76% of CCA users are SMBs), and these teams are increasingly adopting multi-goal metrics such as **unique reach** (+6,214% in usage YoY) and **video completion rate** (+5,879% in usage YoY).

The gap is no longer in measurement (marketers finally have visibility into cross-channel performance), but unified execution still lags, and that's where fragmentation continues to drain budgets and slow growth.

Unified execution leads to higher measurable performance, while fragmentation continues to erode efficiency and scale.

¹In this report, "multi-channel" refers to using multiple channels in parallel, while "omnichannel" refers to unified, cross-channel orchestration.



CROSS-CHANNEL UNIFICATION BECOMES A PERFORMANCE ADVANTAGE



44%
US Marketers

Cross-funnel measurement is the single biggest barrier for US marketers—44% cite it as their top obstacle, more than any other challenge.



61%
UK Marketers

UK marketers are the most advanced in omnichannel execution—61% say they “frequently” run unified, cross-channel campaigns, outpacing the US and Canada.

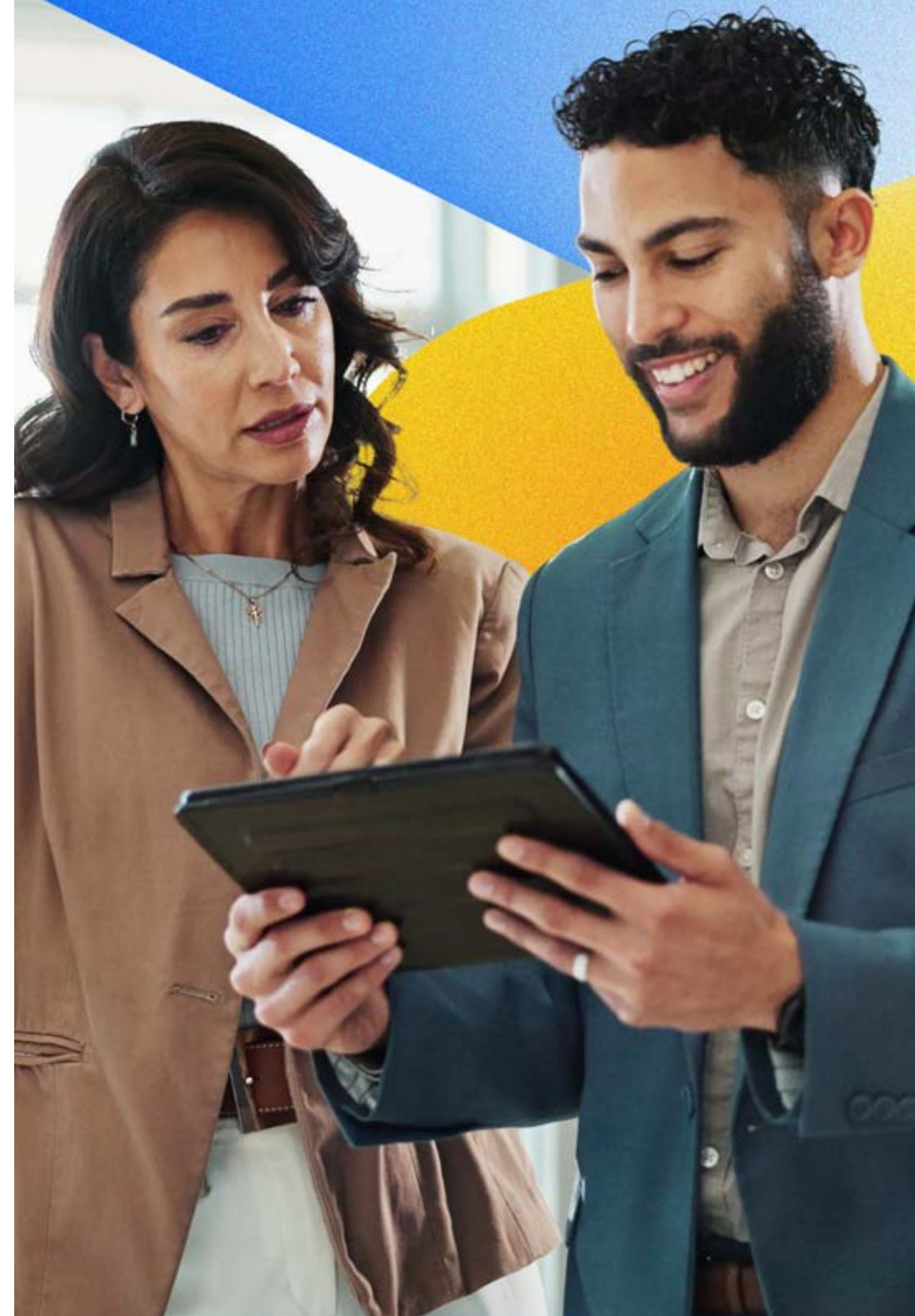


8X
More Conversions

APAC full-funnel campaigns deliver 8X more conversions than single-channel or siloed funnel approaches.

How to Act on This Trend

- 01** Start by running multi-channel campaigns instead of attempting full omnichannel orchestration at once.
- 02** Prioritize channels where you already have strong creative and measurement foundations (e.g., CTV + display retargeting) to build early wins and reduce fragmentation quickly.





Hyatt Asia Pacific Achieves a **43% Lift** in Brand Consideration with a Unified Full-Funnel Strategy

Hyatt Asia Pacific partnered with StackAdapt to unify creative, targeting, and measurement across South Korea, India, and Hong Kong for its Grand Hyatt portfolio. By running a connected multi-channel strategy—combining CTV, in-banner video, social retargeting, and consistent creative sequencing—Hyatt Asia Pacific was able to guide premium travelers through the full customer journey.

StackAdapt's unified platform enabled real-time optimization, mid-funnel performance tracking, and brand-lift measurement, while the Destination Visitation Measurement feature tied digital exposure to on-property visits.

The campaign delivered a 43% increase in brand consideration, along with meaningful gains in website traffic and booking intent—demonstrating the impact of connected, full-funnel execution.



Trend 2

Stack Consolidation Emerges as a Growth Strategy



STACK CONSOLIDATION EMERGES AS A GROWTH STRATEGY

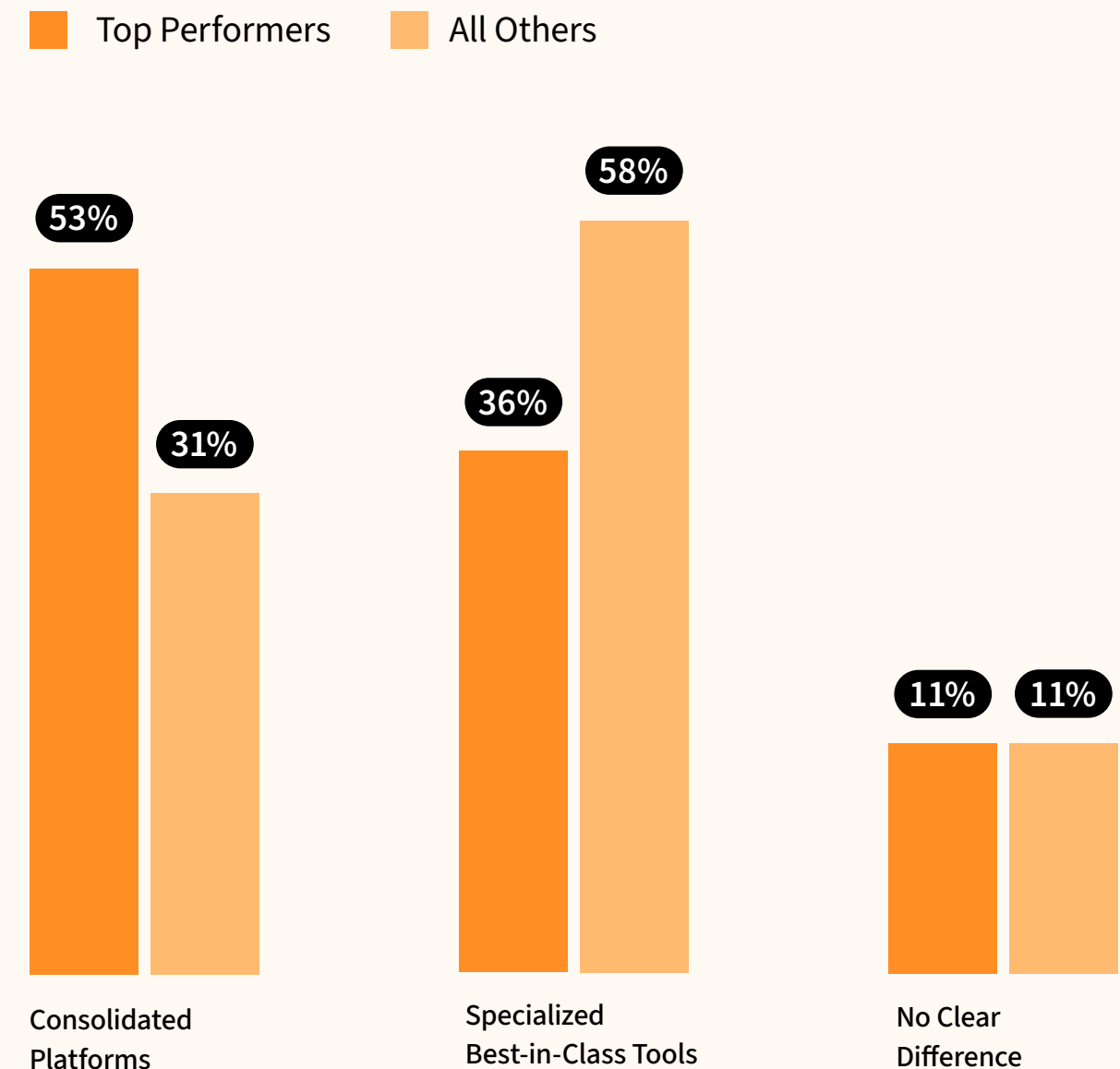
While 53% of marketers believe specialized tools deliver higher ROI, **top performers are 4X more likely to consolidate +50% of their tech stack** by 2027 (16% vs. 4%) and are 22% more likely to credit consolidated platforms for improved ROI (53% vs. 31%).

Our survey results suggest that once marketers consolidate ~25–50% of their stack, they unlock the performance tier that top performers occupy.

This consolidation unlocks intelligence across data, creatives, and optimization.²

² In this context, “consolidation” means modernizing and streamlining the stack, removing redundancies, and centralizing workflows.

Which Approach Delivers the Most Substantial ROI



Note: Based on responses to: "Which approach has delivered stronger ROI for your organization so far?"

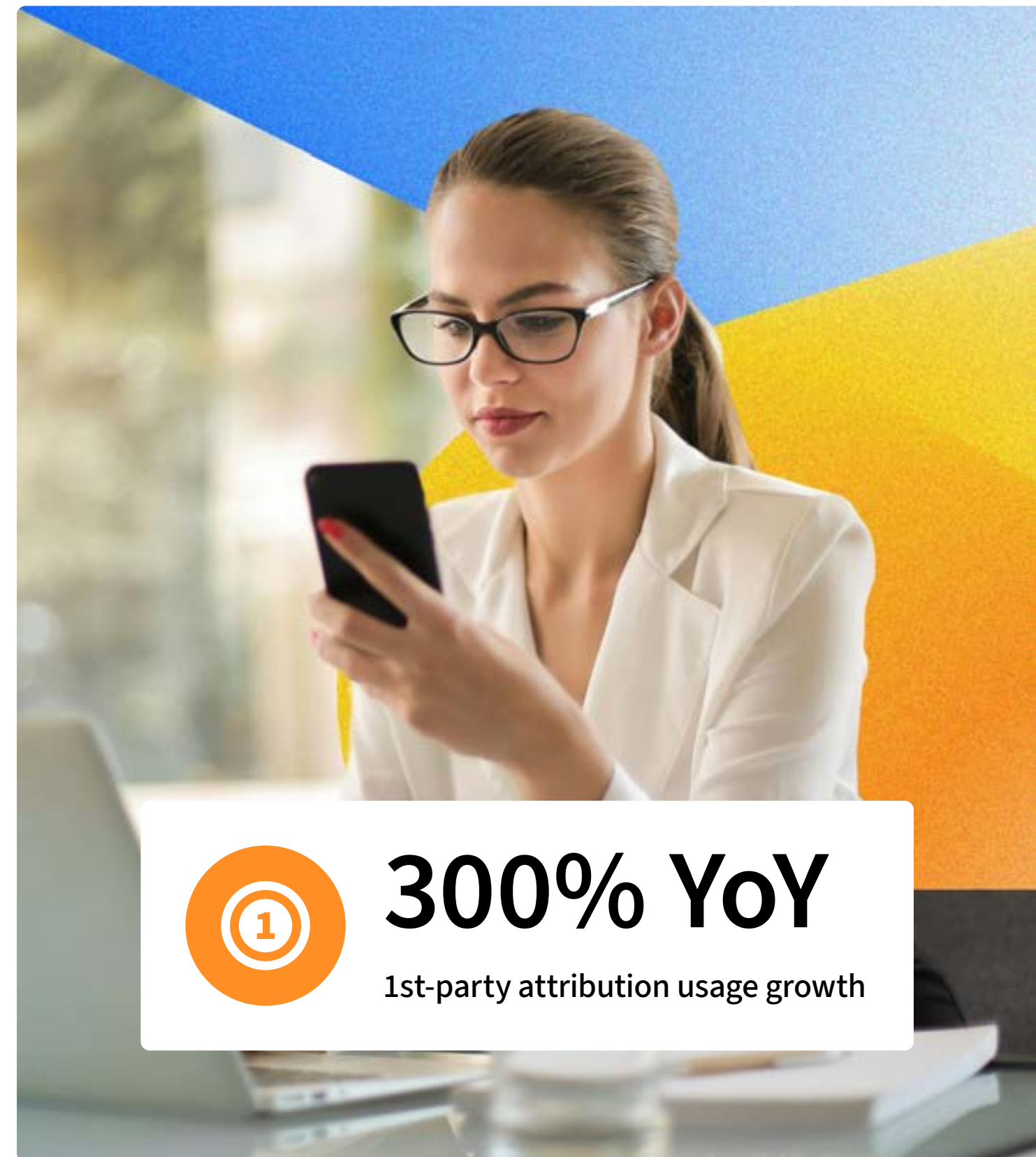
StackAdapt platform usage reinforces this shift toward integrated, data-centric systems: 1st-party data attribution usage grew 300% YoY and Snowflake integrations rose 200% YoY, indicating that advertisers are consolidating inventory, data, and measurement within fewer, more powerful systems.

Expert Insight

“Marketers are pushing their CDP, identity, and media orchestration layers into one environment—often Snowflake-native or clean-room-first—so creative, audience building, and activation all draw from the same 1st-party data warehouse rather than duplicated pipes. Instead of using standalone dynamic creative optimization (DCO) tools, marketers are shifting DCO into DSPs or cloud ML workflows. This lets marketers run creative testing, optimization, and attribution on the same data model that powers bidding, which improves speed and reduces versioning waste.”

**Paul Verna**

Vice President of Content at EMARKETER



STACK CONSOLIDATION EMERGES AS A GROWTH STRATEGY

Prediction for 2026

2026 will be the year of consolidation—not fewer tools for cost savings, but fewer tools for deeper intelligence and action. The marketers who unify creative, data, and owned and paid channels will outperform through higher efficiency, better optimization, and faster execution. Fragmented stacks will become a competitive disadvantage as AI-powered orchestration takes hold.

The marketers who outperformed last year all invested in connected intelligence—data, personalization, creativity, and orchestration. Those still clinging to fragmented or generic tools risk falling behind as these capabilities become the baseline for success.

**13%**

Canadian Marketers

Only 13% of Canadian marketers say they always use unified measurement dashboards—the lowest among all regions, signaling a need for consolidation and interoperability.

**35%**

UK Marketers

35% of UK marketers expect significant budget increases—the highest of all regions—suggesting UK teams are best positioned for consolidation and stack modernization in 2026.

How to Act on This Trend

- 01** Audit your stack for overlapping tools across data management, audience targeting, and creative production, and consolidate where capabilities can live under a single platform.
- 02** Focus on replacing legacy point solutions with integrated workflows that combine AI, measurement, and activation—this is where top performers are seeing the largest ROI gains.



Trend 3

AI Becomes the Intelligence Layer Connecting Creative, Data, and Optimization



AI BECOMES THE INTELLIGENCE LAYER CONNECTING CREATIVE, DATA, AND OPTIMIZATION

Marketers seeing the strongest revenue gains are **+20 percentage points** more likely to be making major AI investments than others (37% vs. 17%) and nearly 2X more likely to expect AI to disrupt campaign orchestration (21% vs. 12%).

Marketers aren’t aligned on how AI will win: performance leaders expect AI to reshape data management (up 7 percentage points), while brand-focused teams see the biggest disruption coming in creative production (up 5 percentage points).

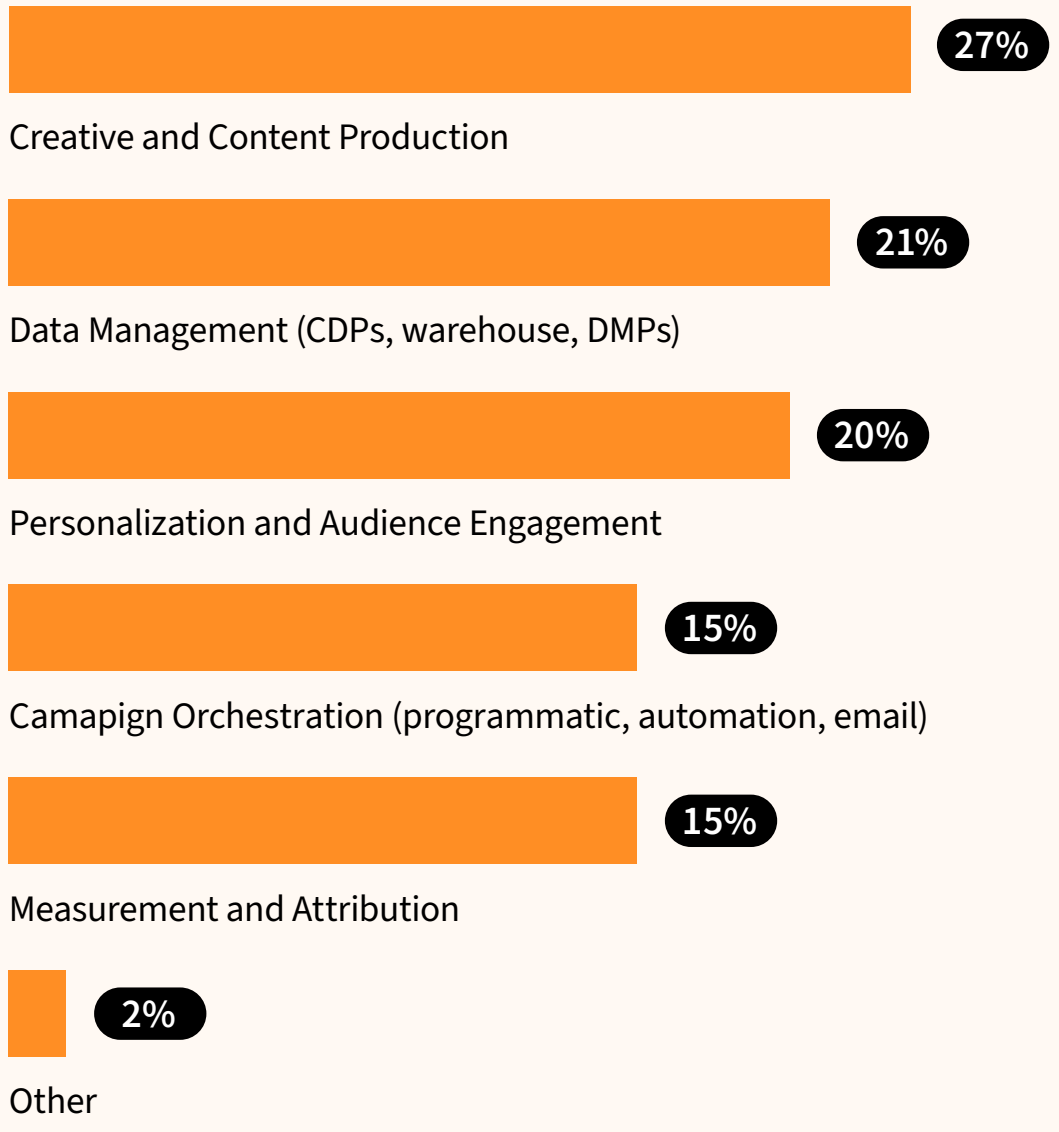
Expert Insight

“The impact of AI is unmistakable and pervasive. Zeroing in on video content, short-form, and CTV-ready variants will scale fastest. AI will handle versioning, formats, and light narrative edits, letting brands run orders of magnitude more creative assets tied to audience signals without adding headcount. Dynamic creative and copy will merge into a single AI decision layer. There isn’t full autonomy in orchestration yet, but AI-generated bid strategies, recommended budget reallocations, and performance simulations are steps in that direction.”



Paul Verna
Vice President of Content at EMARKETER

Where Marketers Expect AI to Hit First



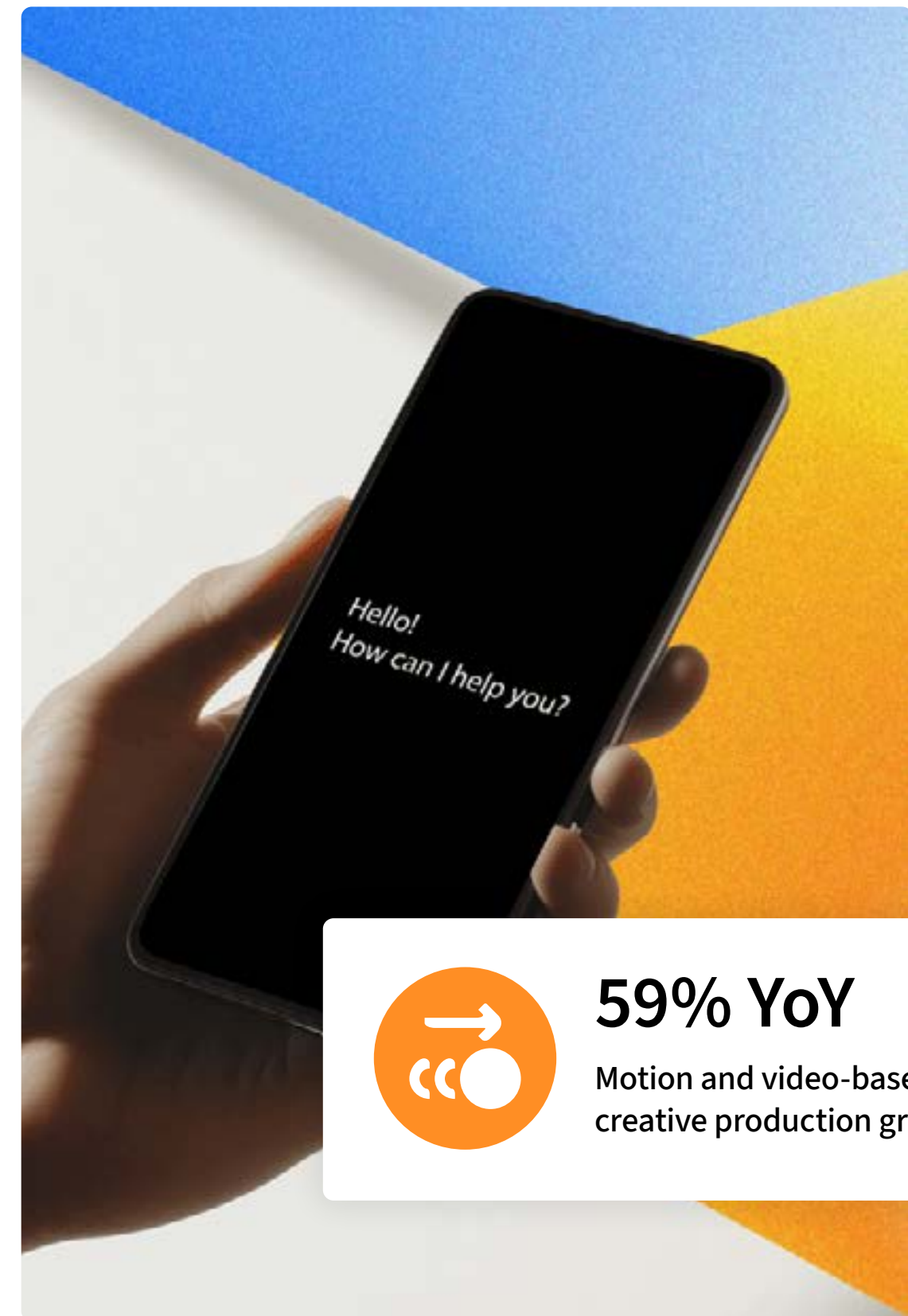
Note: Based on responses to: “Which area of the marketing/ advertising tech stack do you expect to be most disrupted by AI in the next 2–3 years?”

Prediction for 2026

In 2026, AI will play a more central role in creative development, targeting, and optimization, not by running campaigns end-to-end, but by accelerating the workflows marketers rely on most. And while today's marketers see AI's greatest impact through different lenses, AI will increasingly enhance all sides of the craft, touching every workflow regardless of which type of marketer you are.

StackAdapt usage patterns show where this shift is already happening: [the StackAdapt Creative Studio noted that motion- and video-based creative production grew 59% YoY](#), signaling greater demand for formats where AI-assisted editing, resizing, and personalization add immediate value.

Adoption of StackAdapt's AI marketing assistant, Ivy™ (27.8% of advertisers using StackAdapt) and [Page Context AI](#) (17.6%) also shows marketers increasingly using AI to streamline planning, asset generation, and optimization tasks.



As marketers mature, AI will gain precedence in creative iteration, testing and variation, audience refinement, and predictive optimization—the areas where automation delivers measurable speed and consistency without replacing strategy.



2X the ROAS

When advertisers use 1st-party data or AI-based contextual targeting vs. 3rd-party targeting.



32% higher CTR

When advertisers use dynamic creative optimization (DCO).

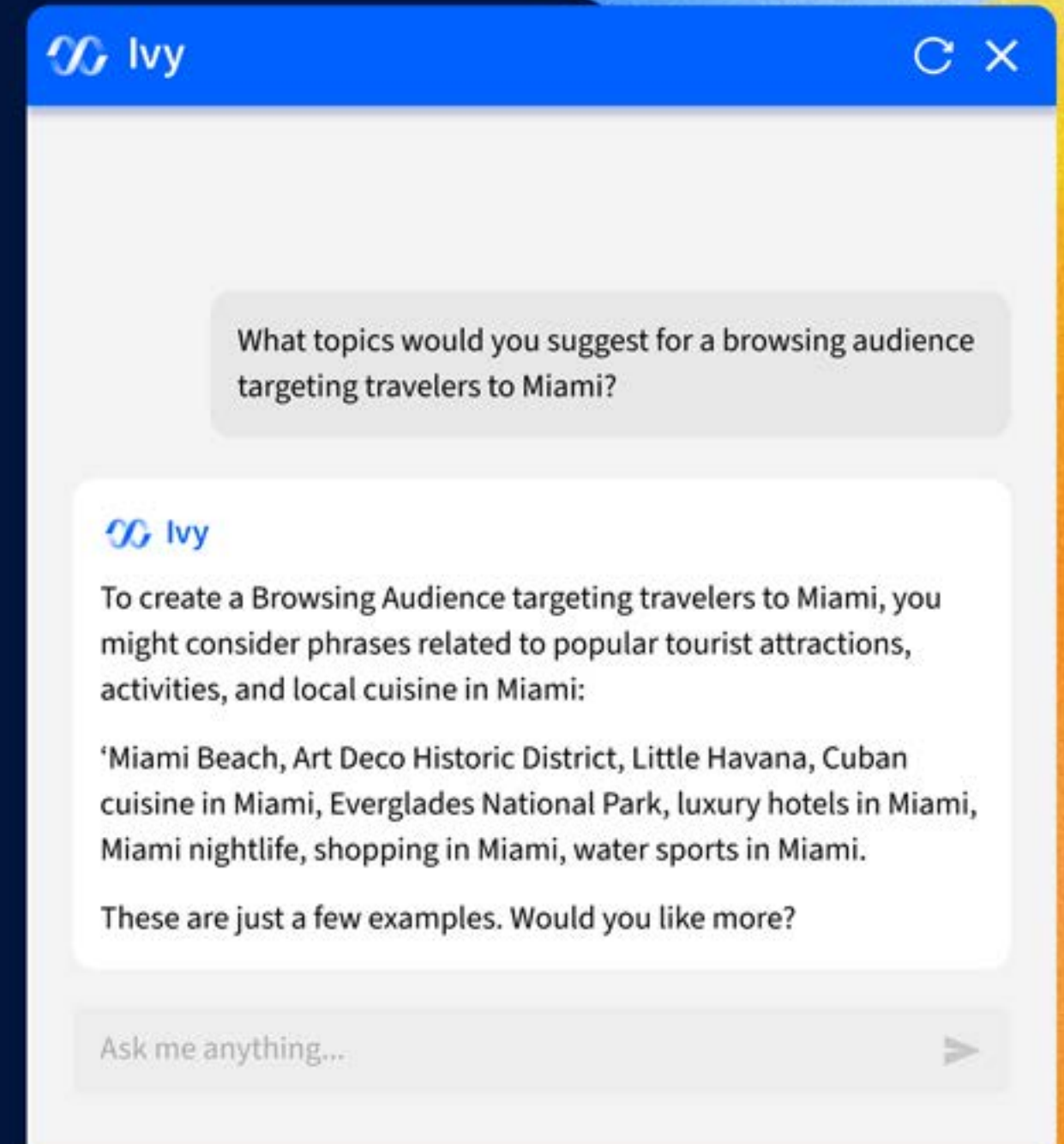


56% lower CPC

When advertisers use dynamic creative optimization (DCO).

How to Act on This Trend

- 01** Begin embedding AI where it creates immediate value: creative iteration, audience modeling, and predictive optimization.
- 02** Treat AI as an accelerant rather than a replacement. Pair machine-generated iterations with human creative direction to scale content faster and drive higher-quality engagement.



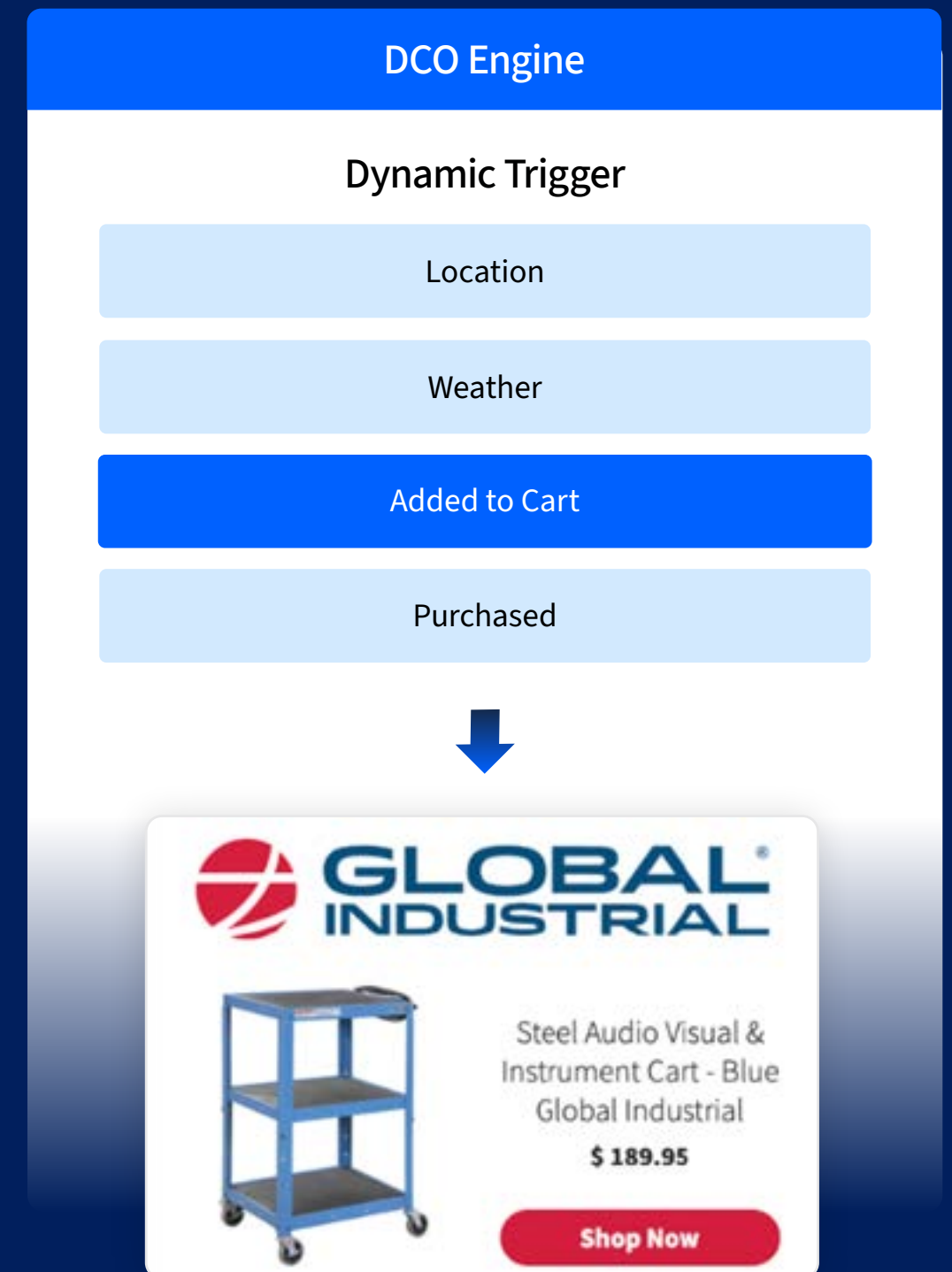


AI-Powered Dynamic Creative Boosts **CTR by 60%** for Global Industrial

Vallo Media turned to StackAdapt's DCO capabilities to re-engage high-value shoppers who abandoned their carts across Global Industrial's 6,000-product catalogue. Instead of producing thousands of bespoke ads, the team used AI-generated dynamic product creatives that automatically adapted to each shopper's behavior and interests.

By pairing DCO with audience and CRM data, Vallo Media delivered hyper-relevant ads at scale, while automated optimization handled the heavy lifting behind the scenes. The results were standout: a 60% lift in CTR and 30% of total ad-attributed revenue generated by DCO, despite the format using only 12% of the campaign budget.

StackAdapt's AI-driven creative engine helped Global Industrial turn cart abandoners into customers—efficiently, intelligently, and at scale.



Trend 4

Omnichannel Ambition Outpaces Infrastructure Maturity



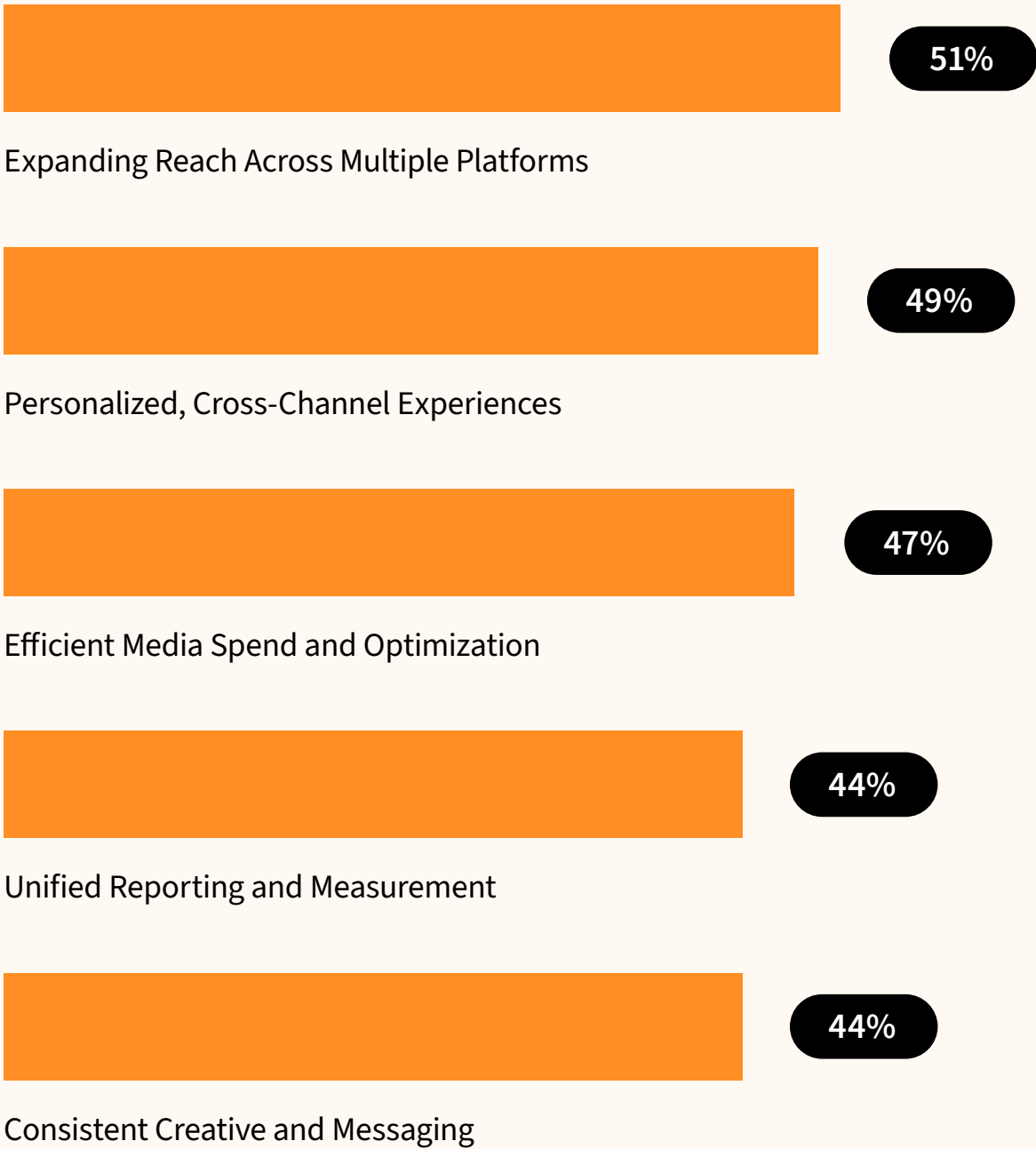
OMNICHANNEL AMBITION OUTPACES INFRASTRUCTURE MATURITY

More than half of marketers cite fragmentation across reach, personalization, optimization, and reporting, with agencies feeling it most acutely.

And while 97.6% of campaigns on the StackAdapt platform run with multi-touch attribution (MTA) enabled, that number oversells the reality of how marketers are using MTA—much of this is due to platform defaults, not deliberate measurement strategy.

The real gap is that marketers aren’t equipped to turn MTA insights into orchestrated action: they have the data, but not the connected systems, sequencing logic, or shared workflows to use it effectively.

Where Silos Hurt Most



Note: Based on responses to: “Which marketing expectations are most challenging to meet when channels operate in silos?”

Expert Insight

“In 2026, orchestration may happen across two or three priority screens, but not all. We’ll see true sequencing happen first across CTV, digital video, and display, or maybe across CTV and social. We won’t see a full six-channel choreography by the end of 2026. We’ll see one performance dashboard with consistent taxonomy. It won’t be a single source of truth, but a consolidated view that normalizes creative, audiences, and outcomes across channels.”

**Paul Verna**

Vice President of Content at EMARKETER

Prediction for 2026

Automation and unified marketing platforms will lower the barrier to omnichannel execution and measurement.

- 01** Although 75% of marketers say they run omnichannel campaigns, only a small percentage use true orchestration—guiding consumers with coordinated messaging across CTV, display, audio, and other channels. Dashboard requests fell 42% YoY, which shows marketers now have visibility, but the activation layer hasn’t caught up. The tools exist, but the workflows to connect channels still don’t.
- 02** When marketers adopt MTA + unified reporting together, they unlock true omnichannel, because they finally gain both cross-channel visibility and the connective insights needed to coordinate audiences, creative, and sequencing across channels. But most haven’t paired the two.
- 03** Measurement clarity is there, but operational orchestration is the missing layer. That gap = wasted spend + inconsistent outcomes.



Across regions, agencies (especially in the US and UK) report the greatest difficulty (vs. brands) delivering reach, personalization, and unified reporting, underscoring the operational gap behind omnichannel claims.

How to Act on This Trend

- 01** Define a realistic minimum viable omnichannel model—typically two to three connected channels with shared reporting, sequencing, and unified KPIs.
- 02** Strengthen the operational backbone by standardizing UTMs, naming conventions, taxonomy, and measurement frameworks so sequencing and cross-channel insights are possible.



Trend 5

Emerging Channels Transition From Experimental to Full-Funnel



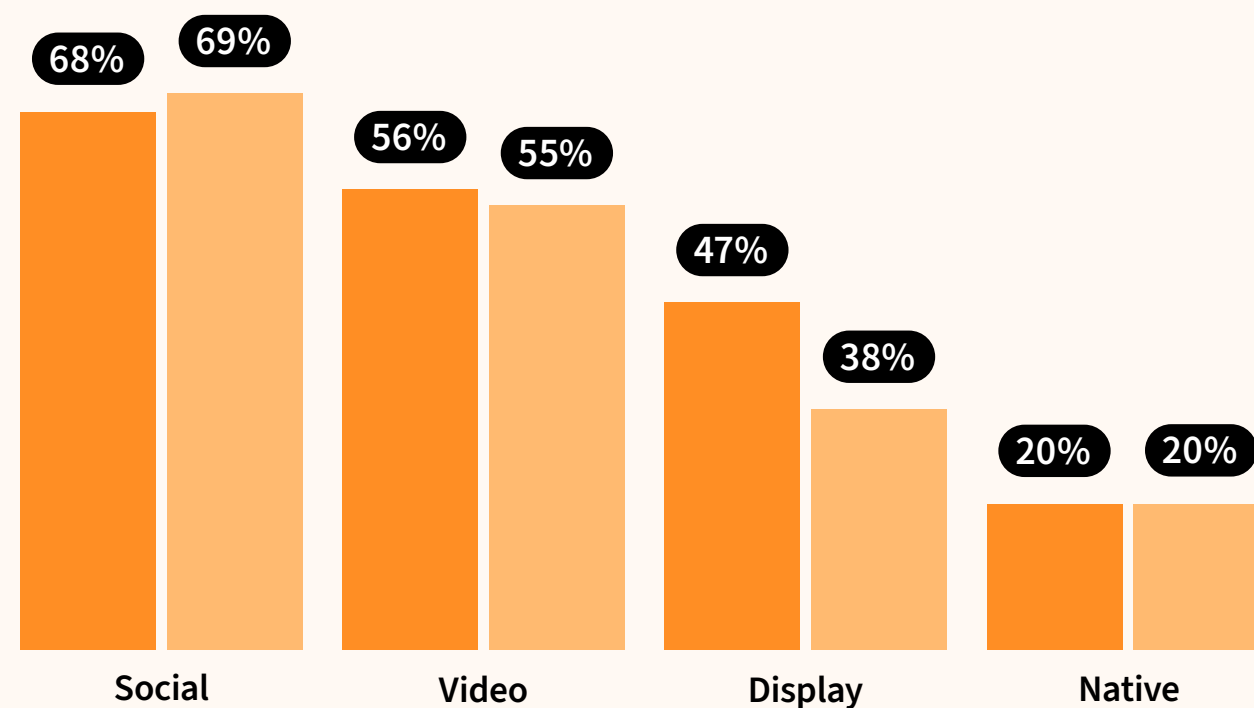
EMERGING CHANNELS TRANSITION FROM EXPERIMENTAL TO FULL-FUNNEL

Marketers with the strongest YoY performance gains are dramatically more likely than peers to invest in emerging formats like programmatic direct mail (40% vs. 28%), in-game advertising (33% vs. 17%), and DOOH (28% vs. 19%), representing a +12 to +16 percentage point performance delta.

Top Performers Invest More Aggressively in Emerging Formats

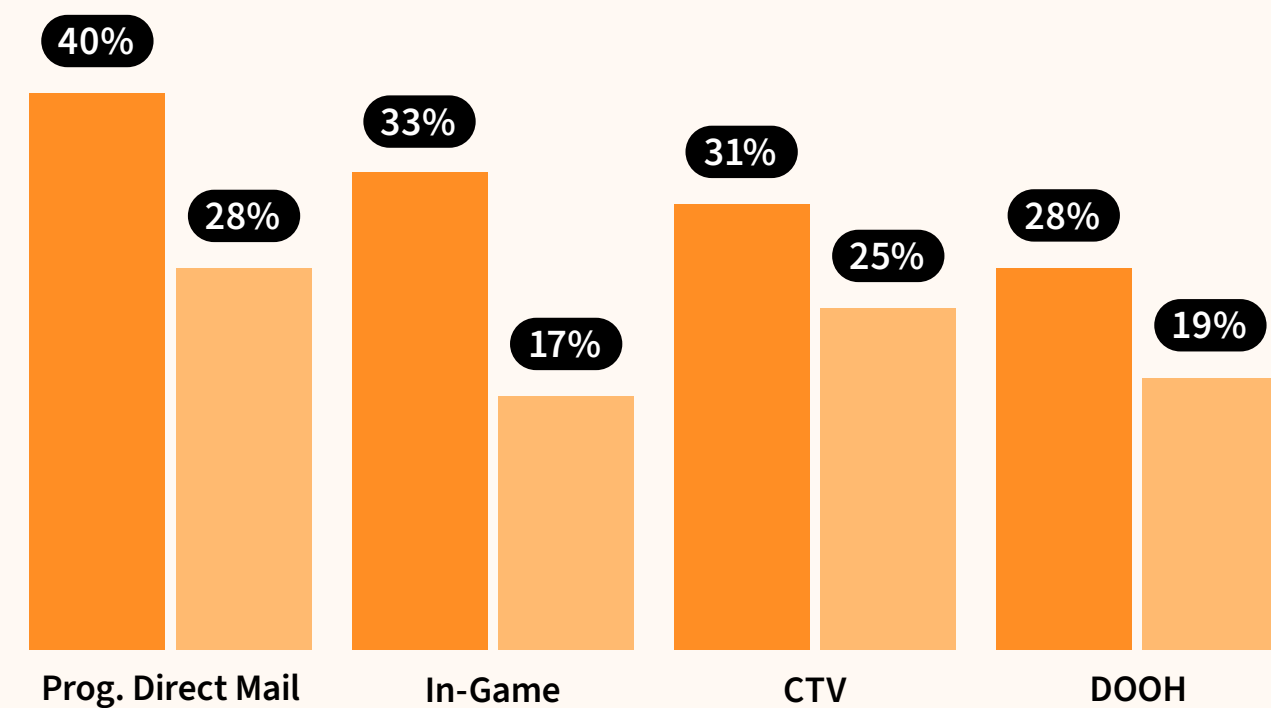
Established Channels

Top Performers All Other



Emerging Channels

Top Performers All Other



Note: Based on responses to: "Which channels are you actively investing in today?"

CTV has officially crossed the mainstream threshold. According to EMARKETER, CTV ad spending in the US will grow at a 12% annual rate through 2029 (outpacing digital advertising overall). By then, nearly 60% of all TV ad dollars will flow to CTV instead of traditional linear.

For its part, DOOH ad spend is expected to rise 34% between 2025 and 2029, with 5–9% annual growth.

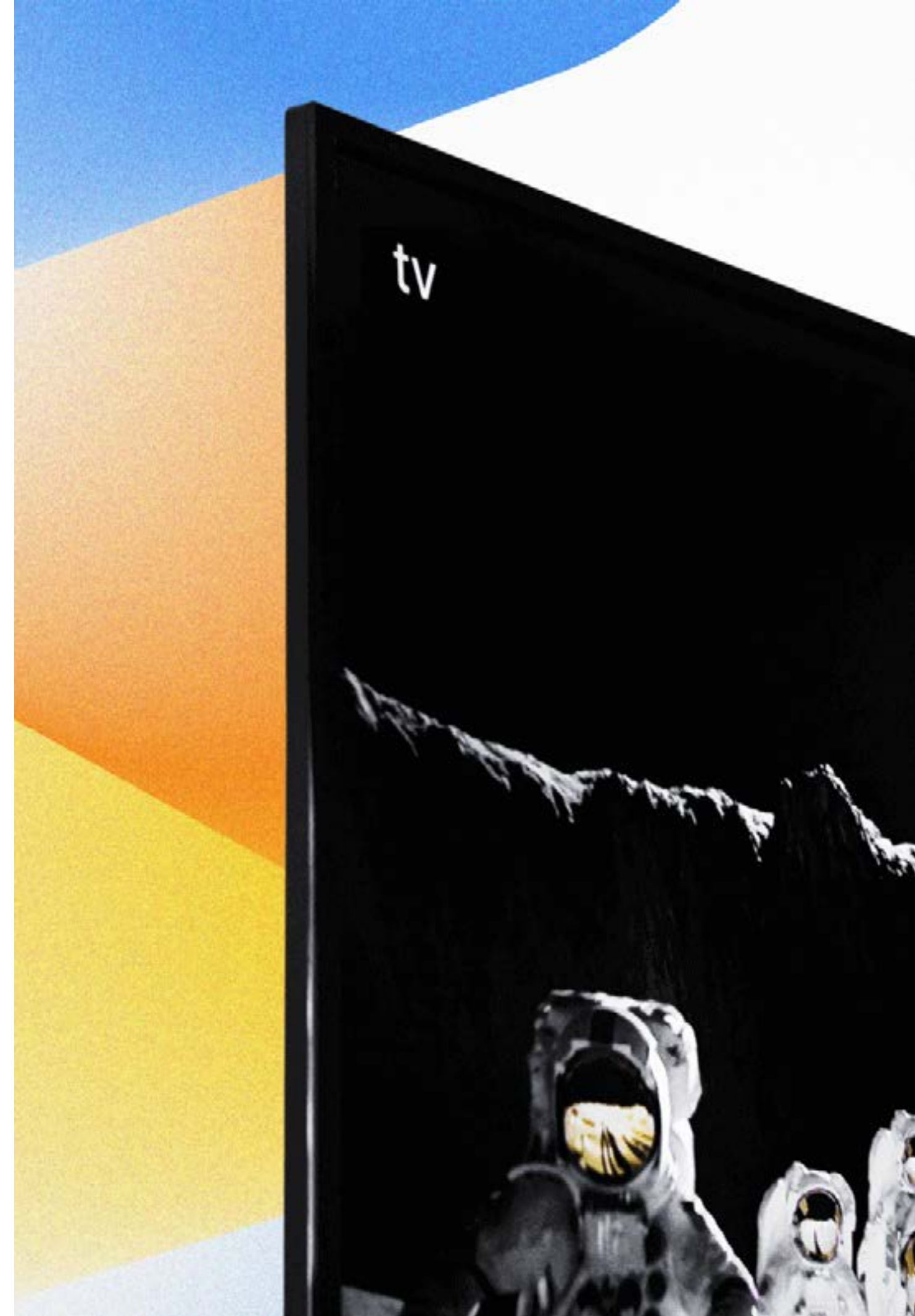
Expert Insight

“Programmatic direct mail is becoming a measurable performance channel, rising fast because it plugs directly into 1st-party data, churn models, and cart-abandon workflows. It works as addressable retargeting for high-value customers and lapsed buyers, with tangible incremental lift. And programmatic DOOH is gaining real distribution, automated buying, and closed-loop attribution via mobile and retailer data. This is moving it from an upper-funnel format to full-funnel activation.”



Paul Verna

Vice President of Content at EMARKETER



Prediction for 2026

Emerging formats like CTV and DOOH will become full-funnel performance channels by 2026.

A few years ago, high-quality video and CTV creative was still out of reach for many smaller advertisers. But AI has closed that gap. Brands of all sizes are now blending AI-assisted editing, stock footage, and user generated content-style storytelling to produce polished, professional assets at a fraction of the former cost. StackAdapt Creative Studio data shows this shift clearly with rising demand for CTV-ready formats.



CTV and DOOH

are predicted to become full-funnel performance channels by 2026.



US marketers are the most aggressive adopters of CTV, DOOH, and in-game, aligning with broader performance ambitions and higher budgets.



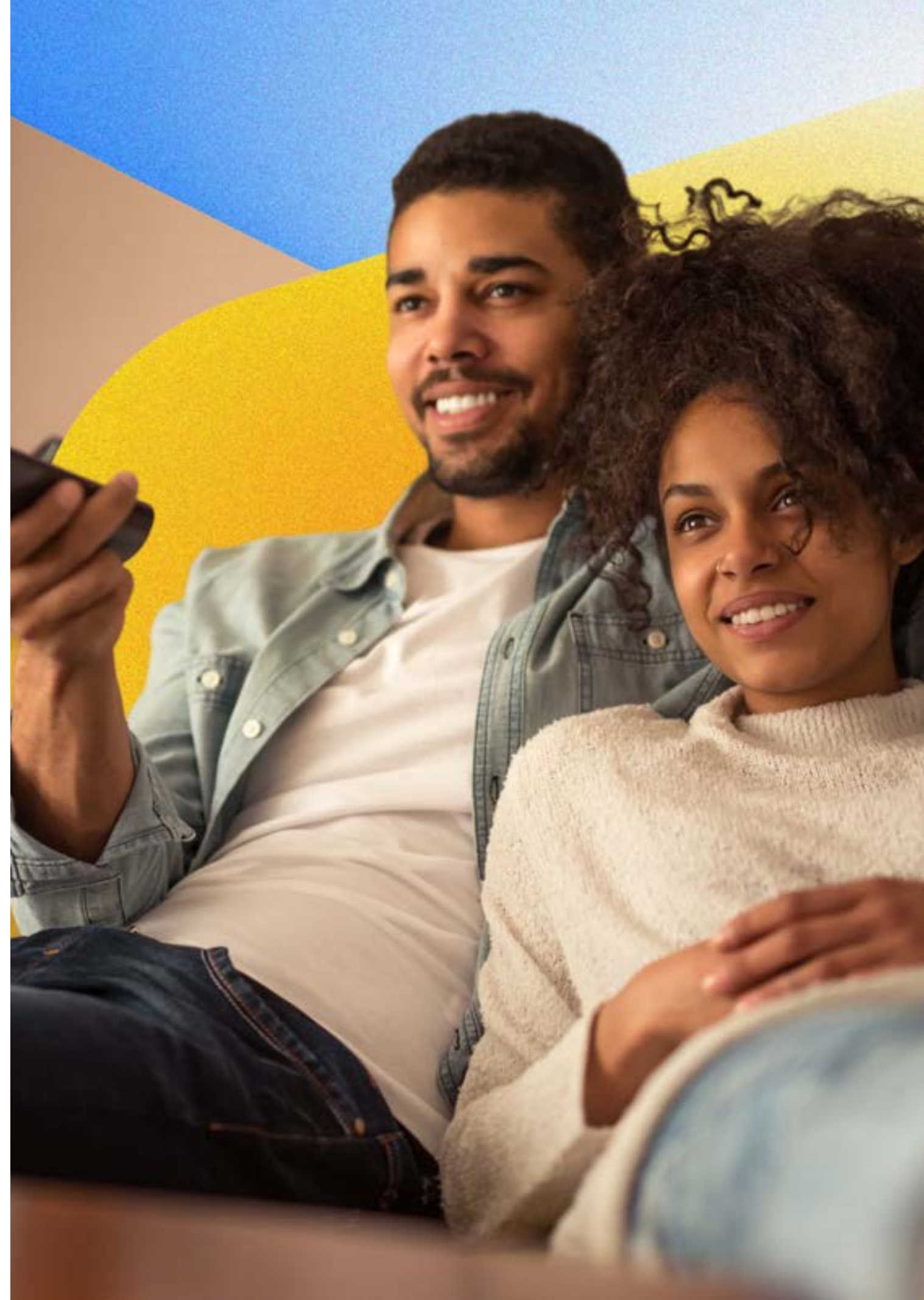
UK teams are quicker to scale CTV and video creative, supported by the region's above-average omnichannel maturity.



In APAC, DOOH ad spending growth is expected to range from healthy (China at 12.1%) to moderate (Australia at 8.0%) to weak (Japan at 4.4%), according to EMARKETER.

How to Act on This Trend

- 01** Pilot emerging channels like CTV, DOOH, and in-game with clear test designs tied to lift metrics (e.g., brand lift, visitation, or ROAS using 1st-party or AI-modeled audiences).
- 02** Use creative templates and AI-assisted production to lower production costs and accelerate your ability to experiment across formats.





VICEROY

Viceroy Elevates Awareness and Drives Sales with Full-Funnel Strategy

Viceroy partnered with Maktagg and StackAdapt to stand out in a crowded European luxury market. The team executed a connected CTV-to-display strategy: premium CTV placements built awareness, and sequential retargeting converted high-intent viewers. StackAdapt's Creative Studio delivered high-impact visuals aligned to Viceroy's modern-luxury brand, while pixel tracking provided full-funnel attribution.

The results were powerful: a 96% VCR, 12,000+ landing-page visits from Creative Studio ads, 30% YoY sales growth, and a 22% boost in retention, achieving a 100.8% ROAS. The campaign shows how unified creative and cross-funnel orchestration can drive both brand lift and measurable performance.





Conclusion

Programmatic advertising is shifting quickly, but the path forward is clearer than it has been in years. Across every sector and region, the data shows that the marketers seeing the strongest gains are the ones embracing connected strategies: unifying their channels, consolidating their technology, adopting AI where it drives immediate value, and investing earlier in emerging formats like CTV and DOOH. The foundations for true full-funnel maturity are finally in place, as measurement has caught up, creative has accelerated, and automation is beginning to reduce the friction that once held teams back.

The future belongs to marketers who integrate intelligently, experiment boldly, and build systems that learn over time. Instead of adding more tools, connect the right ones. Use AI to speed up what's slow, unify what's fragmented, and elevate what already works. And, most importantly, align creative, data, and media in one continuous cycle of insight and improvement.

Get Ready for What's Next

StackAdapt helps brands and agencies put these principles into practice through a unified, AI-driven platform built for full-funnel, cross-channel advertising. From CTV and DOOH to predictive audiences, creative automation, and next-generation measurement, StackAdapt gives marketers the tools they need to move faster, work smarter, and unlock more performance from every dollar spent.



Discover how to put these insights into action on our webinar [2026 Programmatic Advertising: Trends to Watch, Moves to Make.](#)



Methodology

The State of Programmatic Advertising 2026 combines proprietary survey research with StackAdapt platform data to provide a comprehensive view of how marketers are evolving their strategies for the year ahead. The quantitative survey, conducted in partnership with Ascend2, gathered responses from 484 senior marketing professionals across the US, Canada, and the UK. Respondents included brand-side marketers (64%) and agency leaders (36%), all at manager level or above, representing organizations with annual marketing budgets of \$5 million USD or more.

Questions explored marketing and advertising performance, budget direction, omnichannel maturity, AI adoption, technology integration, and measurement priorities. The findings were then cross-analyzed against StackAdapt's own platform performance and usage data—spanning campaign spend, channel mix, feature adoption, and creative production trends—to uncover where marketer sentiment aligns with real-world behavior.



StackAdapt is the leading technology company that empowers marketers to reach, engage, and convert audiences with precision. With 465 billion automated optimizations per second, the AI-powered StackAdapt Marketing Platform seamlessly connects brand and performance marketing to drive measurable results across the entire customer journey. The most forward-thinking marketers choose StackAdapt to orchestrate high-impact campaigns across programmatic advertising and marketing channels.

For more information, visit stackadapt.com.