



# The Marketer's Guide to Boost Sales in 2022

Data, Insights, and Native Advertising  
Recommendations from Outbrain







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# What's happening with consumers?

Connecting with consumers in their shopping journey is always the goal for brands, but it's something few can afford to miss out on during an economic downturn.

Tighter marketing budgets and consumers more conscious of where they spend their money have made brand messaging and marketing strategies more important than ever.

Wondering how your audiences prefer to shop and what they find important in brands to best meet their needs?

Whether you're looking to optimize your existing digital strategy or make a new game plan, we've got you covered with insights that'll help **ensure your brand is at the top of a consumer's wish list.**



The increase in cost-of-living has led to people being more cautious with their consumption and spending habits.

*Q: Compared to 6 months ago, my current cost of living has ...*

	Decreased	Remained the same	Increased
	5.2%	11.2%	83.6%
	10.3%	10.7%	79%
	2.1%	10.1%	87.8%
	3.3%	9%	87.7%
	6.6%	17.3%	76.1%
	5.3%	9.5%	85.2%
	5.1%	15.3%	79.6%

Source, GWI Zeitgeist April 2022, 6 markets, % Audience

However, people feel optimistic that their financial situation will improve moving forward. This gives brands in this space a unique opportunity to support a consumer's financial roadmap.

*Q: In the next 6 months, how do you think your personal finances will change?*

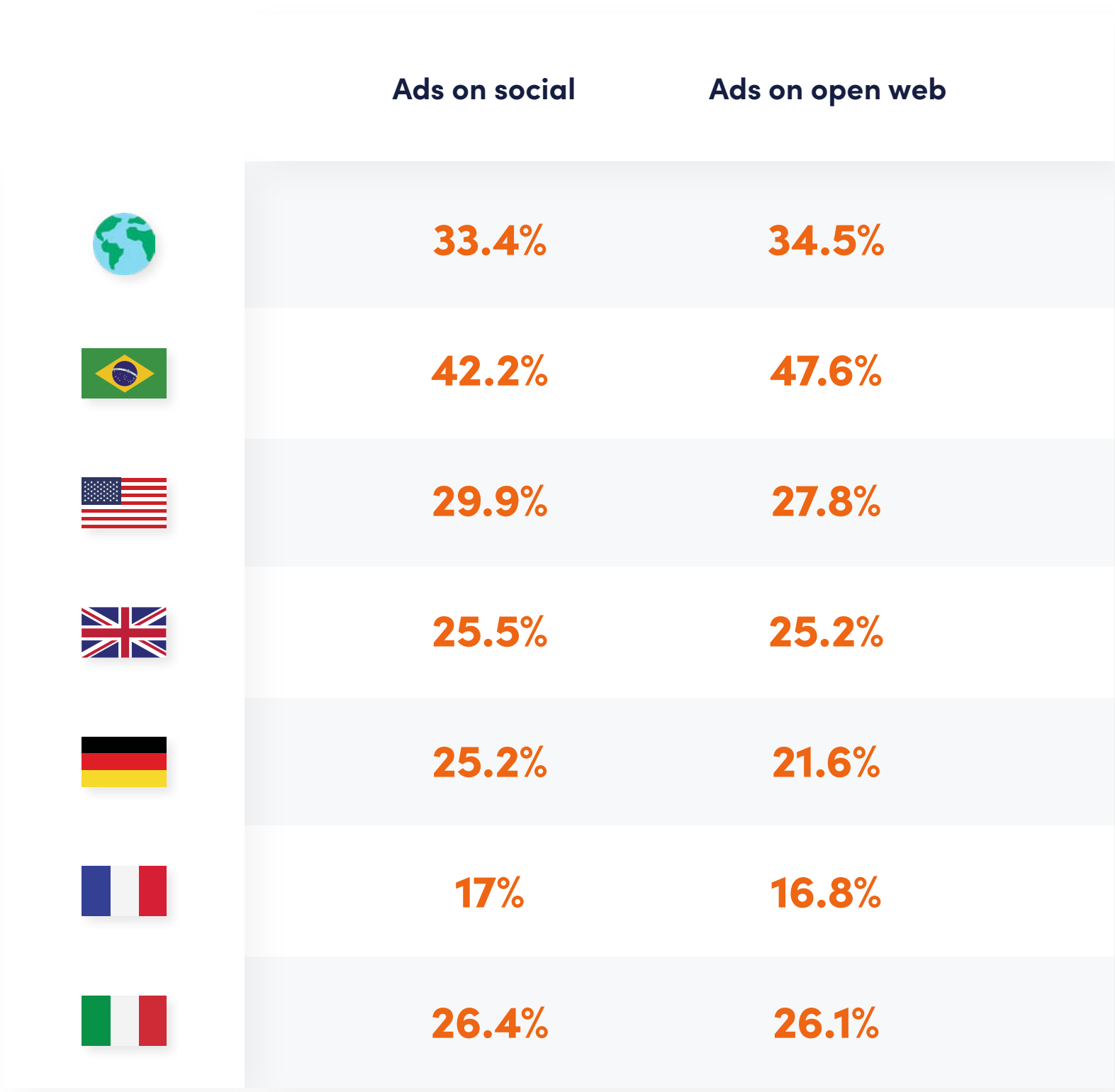
	Get worse	Stay the same	Get better
	11.7%	27.5%	60.8%
	6.7%	19.8%	73.5%
	11.9%	31%	57.1%
	22.8%	32.5%	44.7%
	16.7%	37.6%	46.7%
	21.9%	33.5%	44.6%
	21.4%	34.3%	44.3%

Source, GWI Core Q1 2022, 6 markets, % Audience



When discovering new brands and products, consumers are just as likely to do so via ads on the open web compared to social.

Q: How do you typically find out about new brands and products?



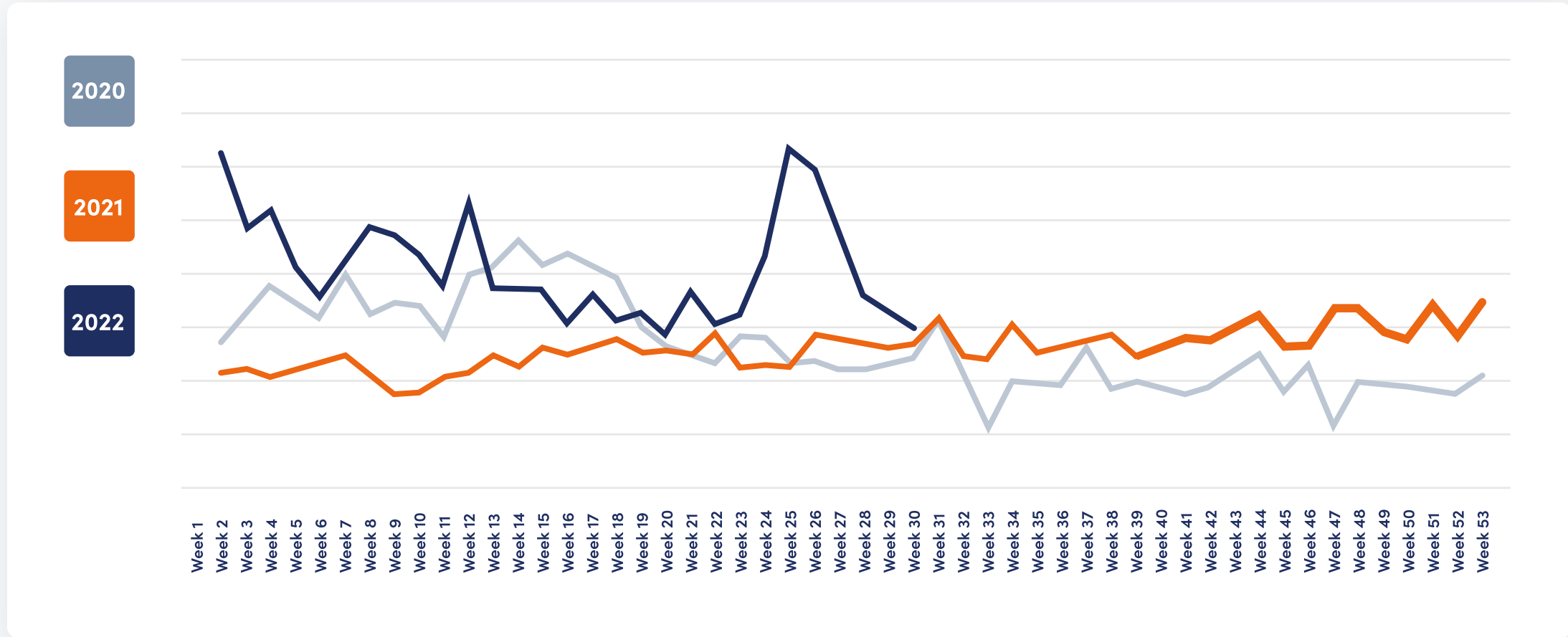
Source, GWI Core Q1 2022, 6 markets, % Audience, Multiple choice question.



Inside Outbrain

With the looming potential recession, our platform shows that content around money management and tools have never been more important. Pageviews are at its highest for this topic in 2022, observing a 106% increase between May and June. This is an opportunity for brands to provide tips and tools that help people balance their financial concerns.

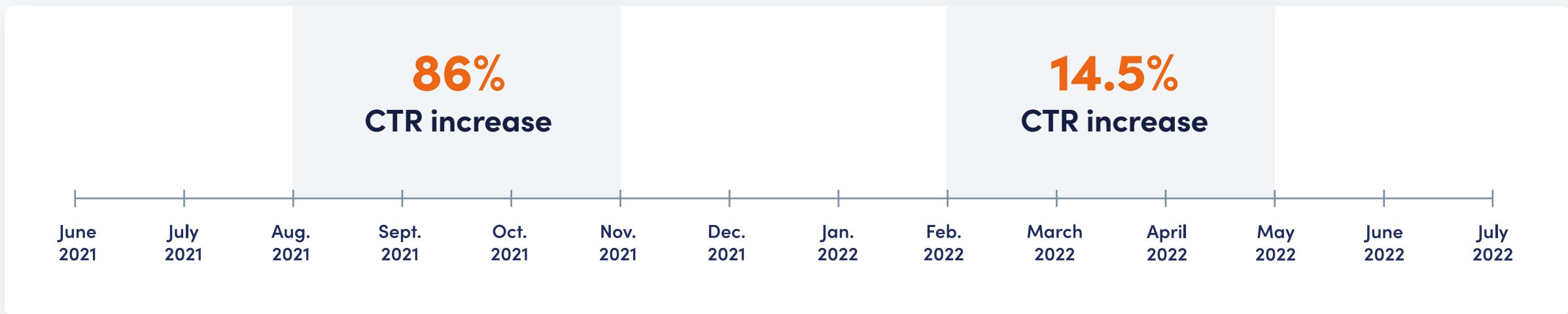
Business & Finance – Management PVs





Inside Outbrain

Business & Finance

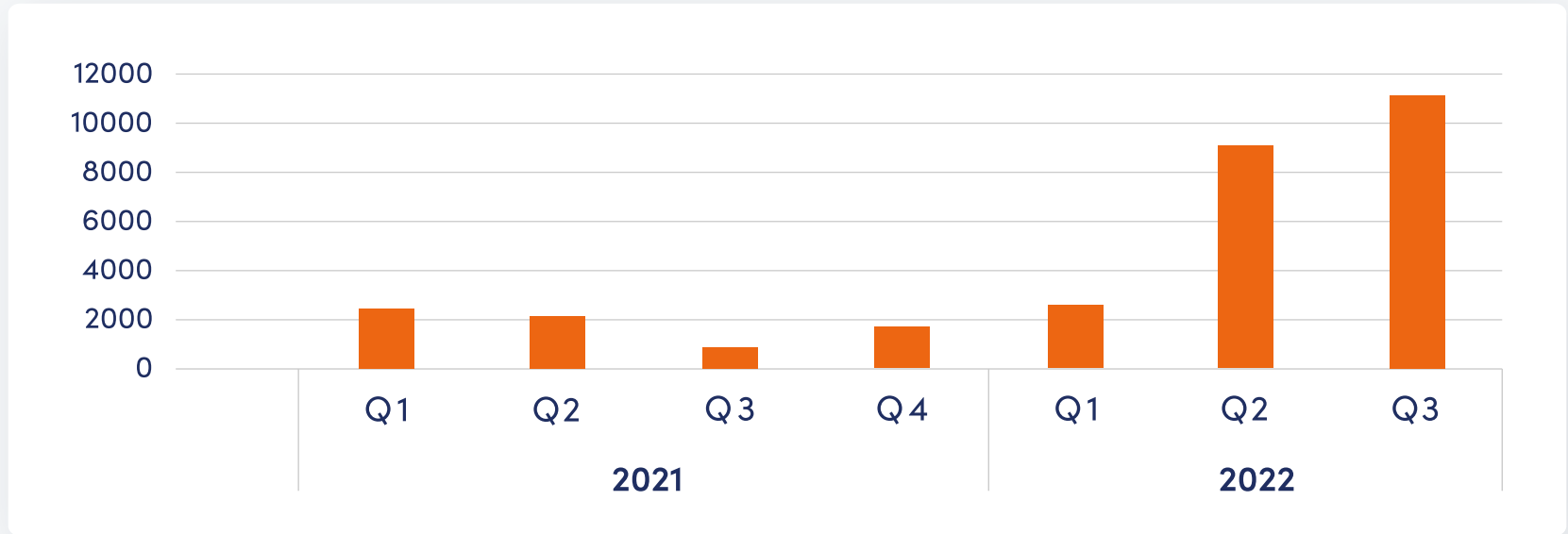


Here we can see the relation between increased brand messaging around today's economic conditions and its relevance in driving consumer clicks, which has grown by 39.5% from Q1 to Q3.

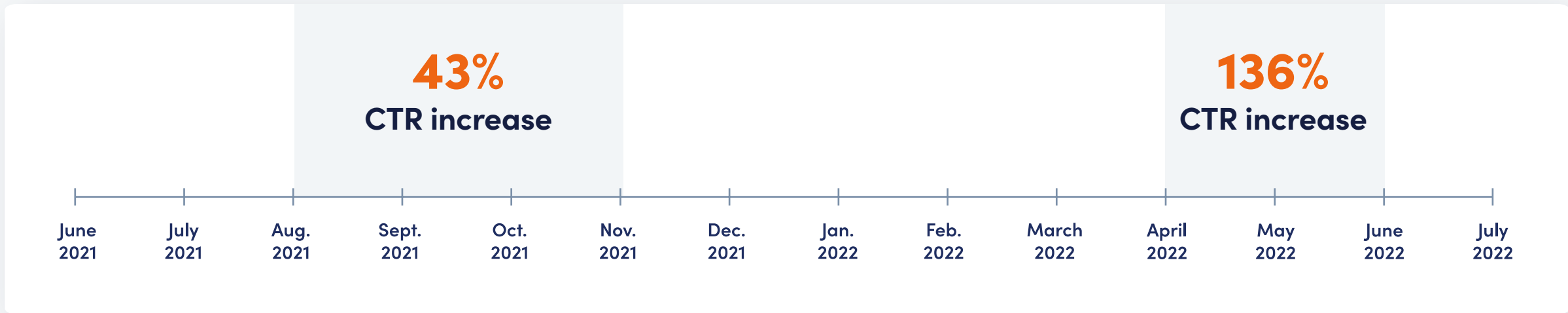
Investing



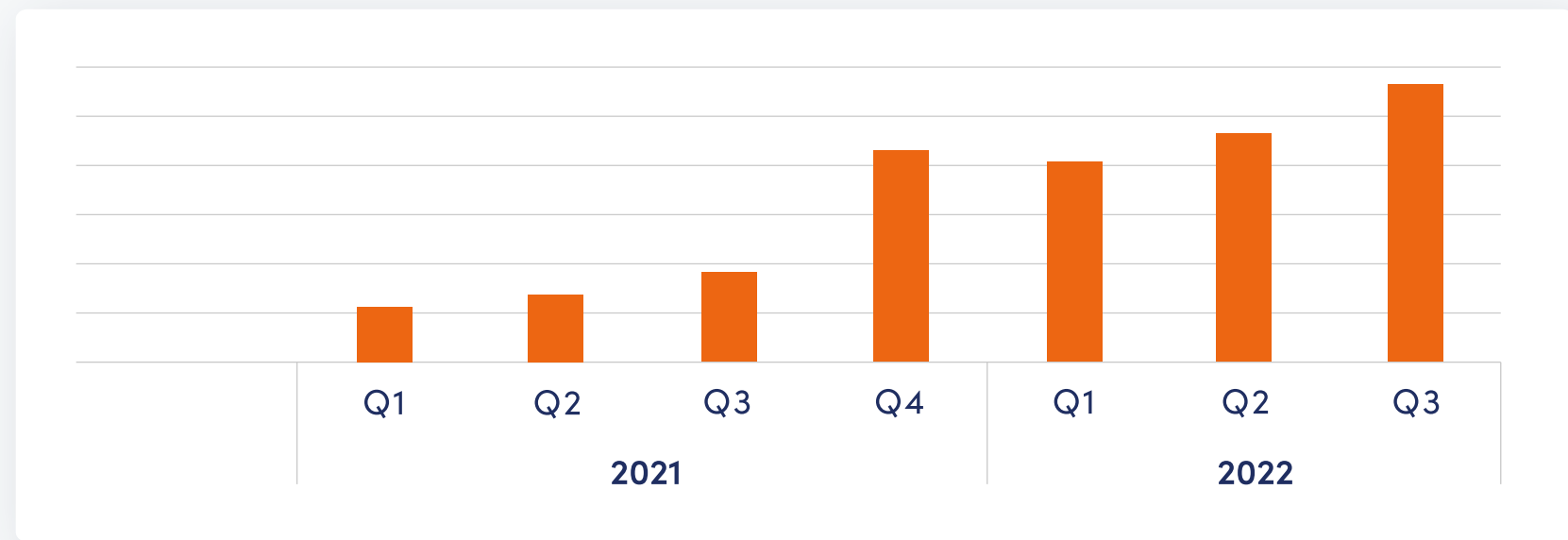
# of Ads Mentioning Recession



Insurance




Recession – Clicks



There are two types of retail shoppers – those who are looking to save money and get the most value, and those more willing to open their wallets. Frugal shoppers take the time to research products before they take the plunge to buy, but once drawn in, are more likely to stay loyal to a brand.

Frugal Shoppers (FG) | Other Shoppers (OS)








Q: Which of the following describes you?

	I research products online before buying	I am loyal to the brands I like
	FG: 65.6% OS: 39%	FG: 50.36% OS: 39.6%
	FG: 79.4% OS: 57%	FG: 48.2% OS: 41.4%
	FG: 60.6% OS: 31.6%	FG: 53.3% OS: 36.6%
	FG: 64.9% OS: 35.2%	FG: 47.5% OS: 35.8%
	FG: 63.7% OS: 36%	FG: 49.4% OS: 39.5%
	FG: 58.2% OS: 37.2%	FG: 51.5% OS: 45.7%
	FG: 65.8% OS: 44.7%	FG: 46.6% OS: 39.9%

Source, GWI Core April 2022, 6 markets, % Audience, Multiple choice question.

When discovering new brands and products, consumers are just as likely to do so via ads on the open web compared to social.

Q: How do you typically find out about new brands and products?

	Ads on social	Ads on open web
	34.2%	32.1%
	43%	47.7%
	33.6%	28.2%
	31.5%	25.6%
	27.4%	19.5%
	15.5%	13.6%
	26.3%	23%

Source, GWI Core Q1 2022, 6 markets, % Audience, Multiple choice question.

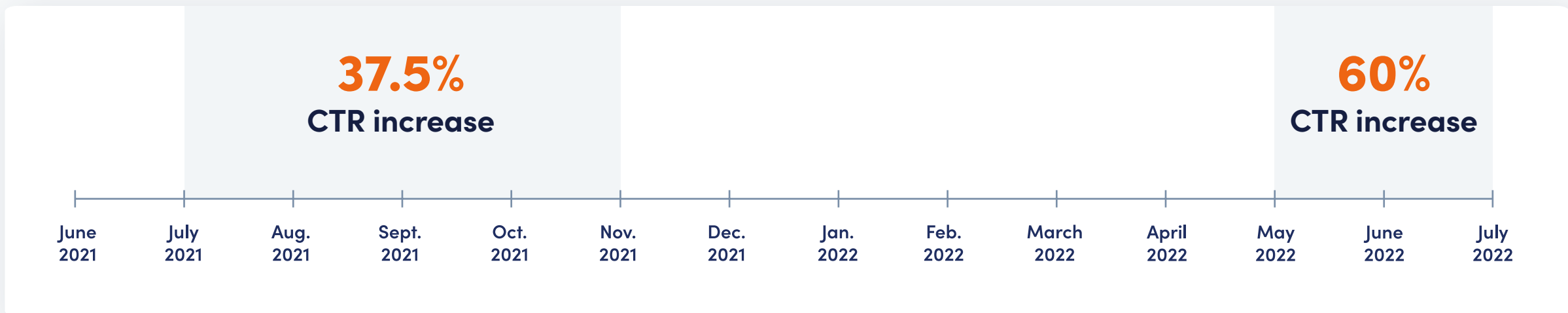




Inside Outbrain

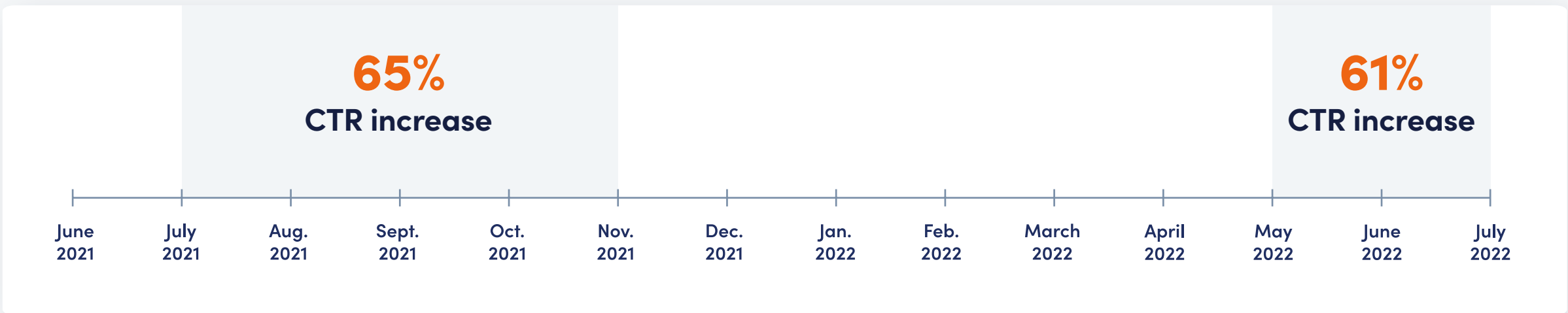
Looking at our platform, we typically see higher engagement for paid beauty ads from Q3 to Q4. This is a good sign of what's to come this year for beauty content, evidenced by strong engagement growth between May and July.

Beauty



The same applies to retail/fashion, a category that consumers undoubtedly prioritize toward year's end.








Retail & Fashion





To increase a shopper's chances of buying your product, promote free delivery or quick delivery times in your messaging.

Q: When shopping online, which of these features increase your chances of buying a product?

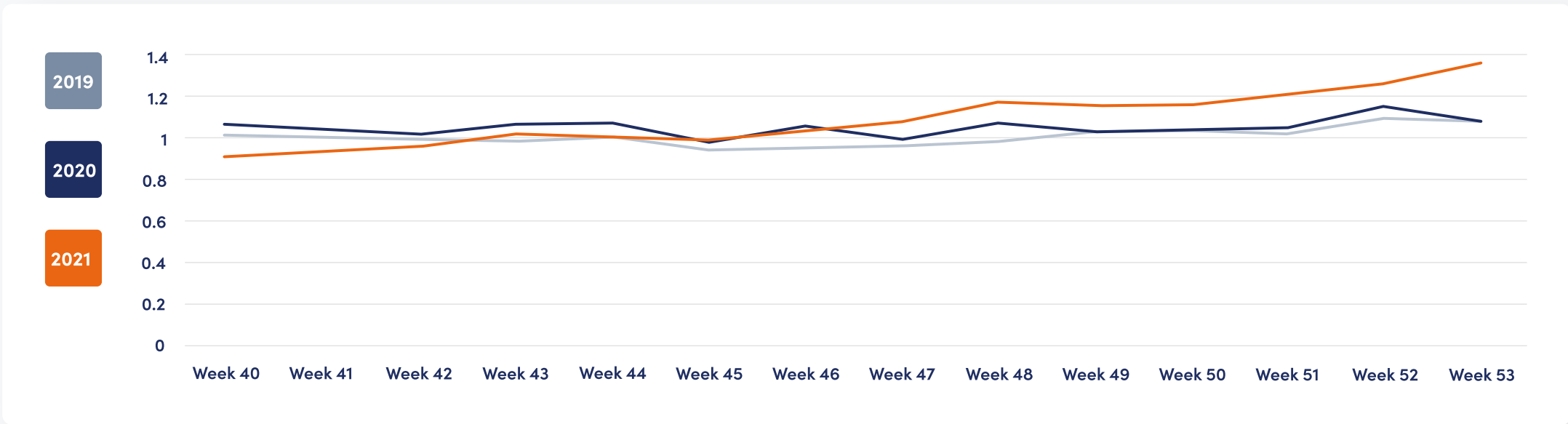
	Free delivery	Next-day delivery	Easy online checkout
	68.2%	37.3%	38.2%
	73.6%	43.1%	45.5%
	65.3%	35.9%	38.3%
	69.4%	41.2%	37.7%
	64.4%	31.3%	33.5%
	69.2%	32.1%	17%
	66.9%	31.6%	39%

Source, GWI Core Q1 2022, 6 markets, % Audience, Multiple choice question.



Inside Outbrain

Based on recent trends, retailers can expect e-commerce growth to continue in 2022.










Based on the top-CTR retail categories from our platform, consumers are particularly interested in brands that offer:

- Entertainment/fashion
- Home & Lifestyle goods
- Technology for mobile
- Tech software
- Gaming

Heightened levels of stress and anxiety from the pandemic has shone a spotlight on health as a priority for people everywhere.

Mental Health (M) | Physical Health (P)

Q: "I'm more conscious about looking after my mental/physical health now than before the pandemic"

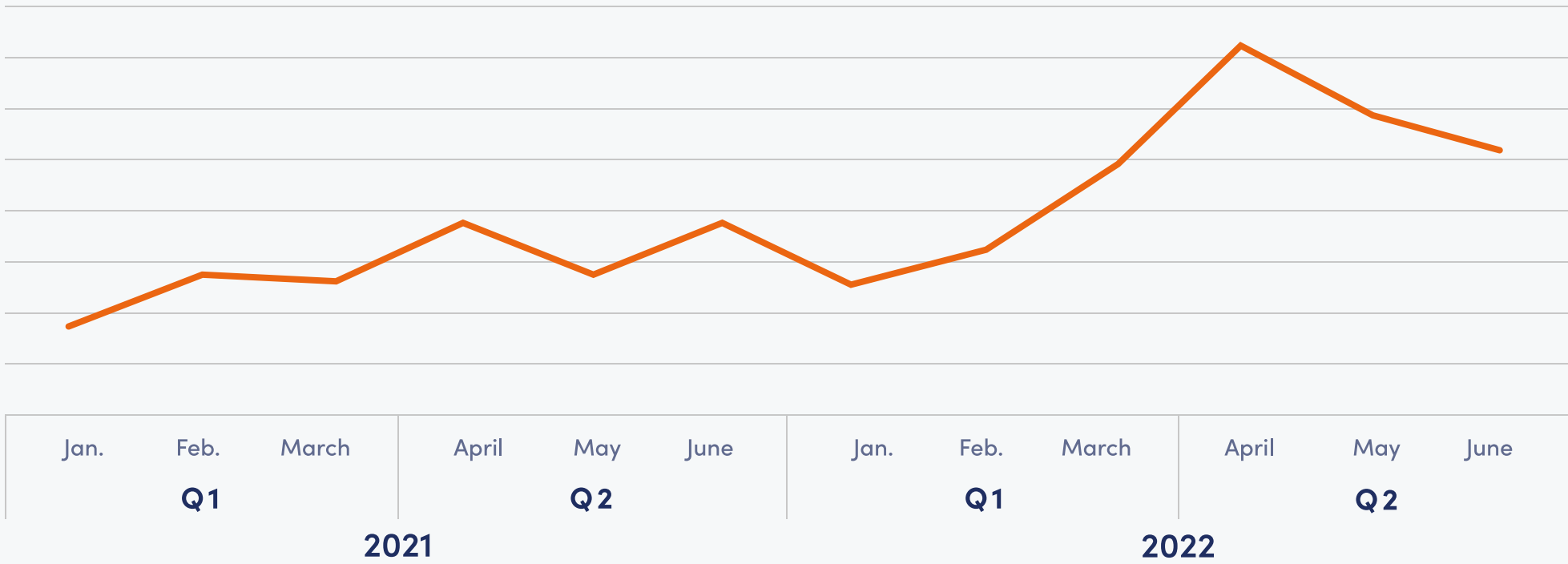
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
	M: 32.7% P: 21.3%	M: 23.7% P: 36.6%
	M: 33.4% P: 38.3%	M: 46.1% P: 37%
	M: 31.6% P: 19.2%	M: 19.2% P: 38.3%
	M: 35.8% P: 14.5%	M: 15.4% P: 35.7%
	M: 28.2% P: 8%	M: 9.6% P: 28.8%
	M: 34.2% P: 10.6%	M: 11.2% P: 34%
	M: 38.4% P: 11.5%	M: 13% P: 40.8%



Inside Outbrain

Interest in mental well-being is rising across the Outbrain platform, as people are more willing to stay informed, safe, and connected when it comes to health products and services.

CTR for Mental Health



Source, GWI Zeitgeist September 2021, 6 markets, % Audience



Consumers are taking a variety of actions to address their mental and physical health.  
Brands across product categories can find new areas of opportunity by tailoring messaging to emerging trends.

*Q: Which of the following are you doing more of to manage your mental health?*

	Exercising more	Doing hobbies I enjoy	Relaxation i.e. yoga	Spending less time on social
	37.3%	34.6%	15.5%	17%
	45.9%	42%	22.3%	23.7%
	35.9%	32.6%	14.9%	15.5%
	32.3%	28.6%	9.7%	13.9%
	31.6%	27.2%	12.2%	10.6%
	29.5%	34.3%	9.1%	12.5%
	38.3%	37.8%	12.9%	16.6%

Source, GWI Zeitgeist September 2021, 6 markets, Multiple choice question.

*Q: Which of the following are you doing more of to manage your physical health?*

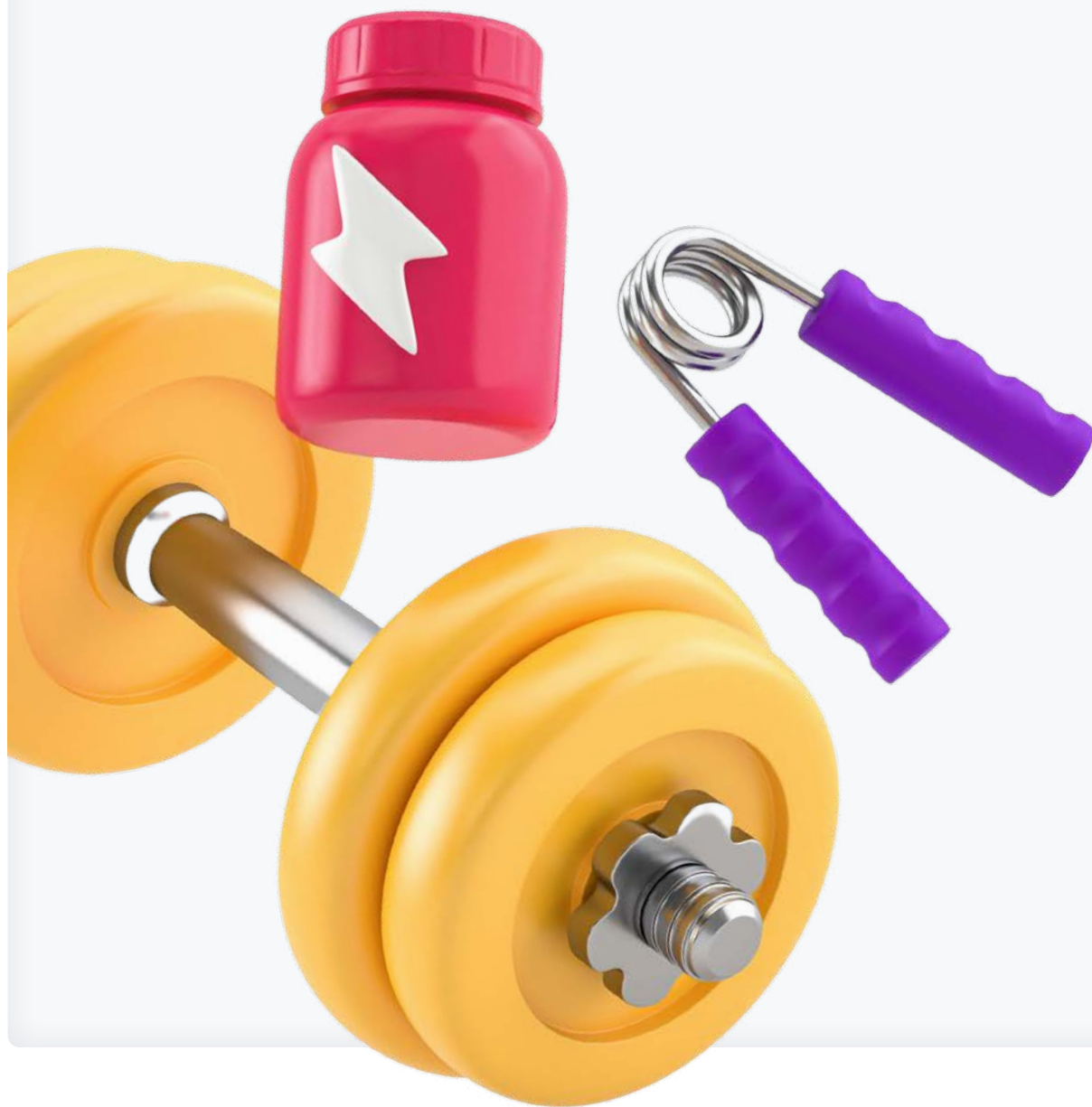
	Eating healthier	Exercising regularly	Vitamin supplements	Spending time outdoors
	40.3%	40.6%	27.6%	30.7%
	52.1%	47.4%	30.7%	32.3%
	38.3%	41.6%	32.9%	29.3%
	31.5%	36%	22.7%	28.6%
	29.2%	34.2%	15.1%	35.2%
	34%	30.6%	14.9%	25.1%
	43.8%	35.9%	24.1%	35.5%

Source, GWI Zeitgeist September 2021, 6 markets, Multiple choice question.

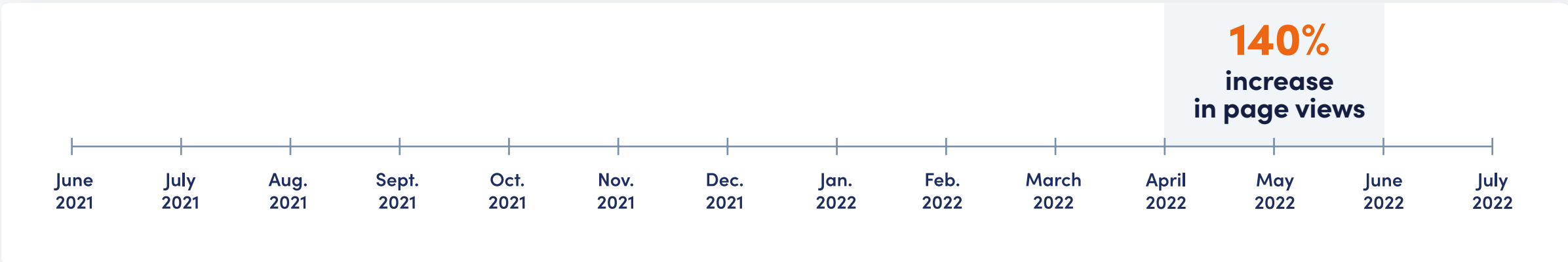


Inside Outbrain

Our platform data shows not only an uptick in women's and men's health in the first half of this year, but also increased interest in topics such as weight loss and fitness.



Weight Loss



Fitness



Women's Health



Men's Health





# Add Native to Your Media Mix

## Beyond Cookies

Understanding consumer behavior will be different without third-party cookies. Once an easy way to capture user data and customize online experiences, digital privacy concerns have signaled a need for alternative solutions to build on and connect with customers.

The divisive question: can we expect privacy and a relevant online browsing experience?

The answer is **YES**. An increase in privacy doesn't mean a trade-off in personalization. Engage with customers in a better way, by collecting first-party data to deliver timely and compelling content to users, with better brand experiences in relevant environments.

Outbrain has 15+ years of contextual technology expertise, investing in industry-leading contextual recommendation technology that goes beyond pure category matching to drive high performance in a competitive e-commerce world.





Now that you've seen what trends are impacting consumer shopping habits and how it reflects on the **Outbrain platform**, it's time to understand why native ads on the open web should be part of your next campaign.





# Why Include Native into Your Media Strategy

## Rising digital ad costs on social

It's no secret that digital ad prices are increasing with the demise of cookies and in-app tracking changes making it more expensive for marketers to reach the right audiences on social platforms. And it doesn't end there – social media ad costs have risen by an average of 61%, with some agencies even detecting a 1000% price increase in certain industries. In addition, prioritization of video ads over static images now requires more investment to stand out in your organic or co-branded efforts on social platforms like Instagram.

Diversification is more than a trend. To keep your ROAS positive, it's critical to distribute your spend across channels.

## Content consumption mode

For marketers and brands, it starts by reaching audiences when they are already reading premium content. Discovery is when we are open-minded, time-easy, and most willing to explore new topics, brands, and offers. Now, combine that with advertising in a native environment that's proven to drive real engagement and action thanks to users being most receptive in that moment.

## User interest

Consumer reading habits and the actions they take from various articles are what build Outbrain's Interest Graph. We collect data points from 1 billion consumers, surfacing their combination of interests to give marketers a better understanding of the consumer mindset, based on context rather than demographic.



# Native and Other Channels

Native is **complementary** to other channels. Add the discovery mindset to the mix, and you have an opportunity to create new demand and drive more customers down the funnel. Think of discovering on the open web as owning the pre-search phase — the moment when you can influence action by connecting with customers who are a great fit for your brand but may not know it yet. This makes native ads on the open web ideal for marketers, with incremental reach you can't get from search, social, and other channels.



## Native Ads vs. Paid Social

(Outbrain Internal Data)

Native ads are:

44%

More Trustworthy

21%

Higher CTRs

24%

More Likely to Drive Purchases

## Native Ads vs. Display

Native ads are:

60%

More Informative

(Outbrain Native Ads Study)

8X

Higher CTRs

(App Nexus)

20%

More Inspiring for Future Purchase

(Outbrain Native Ads Study)



# From Theory to Practice

## Navigating through KPIs

The most important part of setting a KPI is choosing an objective that best reflects what you want your campaign to achieve for your business.

Is your primary goal to educate your audience about a product you're selling, or are you simply looking to differentiate yourself from the competition? If so, focus on objectives that influence consideration, like traffic and engagement. This could be the number of visits to your landing page or how long users spend reading your content.

If you're looking to collect leads or drive sales, your main focus should be driving conversions. Make sure your conversion type is clearly defined - whether it's to have a user fill out a form, request a demo, add an item to cart, or purchase your product.

### Marketing objective

### When to use it

#### Influencing consideration

Selling a product that requires educating customers  
Selling a product that you want to differentiate from others  
Encouraging customers to explore what you offer

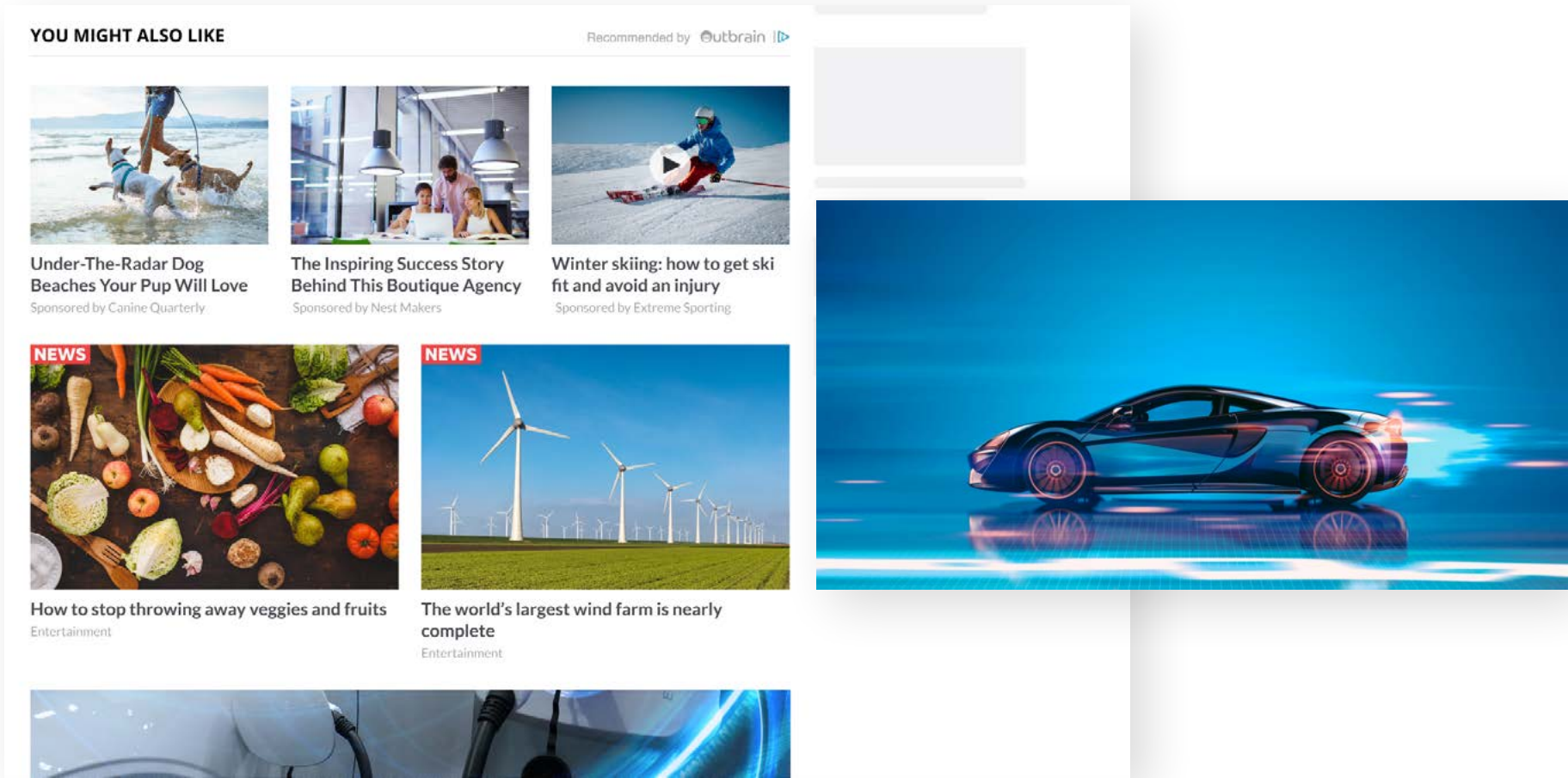
#### Drive action

Finding customers very close to making a purchase decision  
Selling a product or service  
Collecting leads

# Shaping Your Creatives for Native

You may have campaigns running on social, search, and display media. While it’s possible to start native campaigns with those assets, getting the most out of native requires understanding its unique style in what works best.

Think about your ad image as a stop sign – your audience is browsing their content feed but it’s your image that gets them to stop scrolling and pay attention. Here are some recommendations for you to consider.



Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
<p>Always use a high-resolution image. The recommended size is 1200 x 800 pixels</p> <p>Use 3-5 different image variations</p> <p>Avoid using text or logos in your image</p>	<p>Use lifestyle images over cartoon or stock images</p> <p>Use close-up images rather than wider shots</p> <p>Relate your image closely to your landing page content</p>	<p>Use relevant brand attributes such as colors</p> <p>Use portraits rather than people in action</p> <p>If you’re promoting a product, include it in your image</p> <p>Use images that best portray your target audiences</p>



## Health

Morning,  
cooking-related items,  
sustainability,  
scientists/science



## Tech

Streaming media, content  
creation, software/video/  
creative editing tools



## Finance

Autos (cars, motorcycles,  
repairs), tourism,  
joyful people,  
work-related activities



## Retail

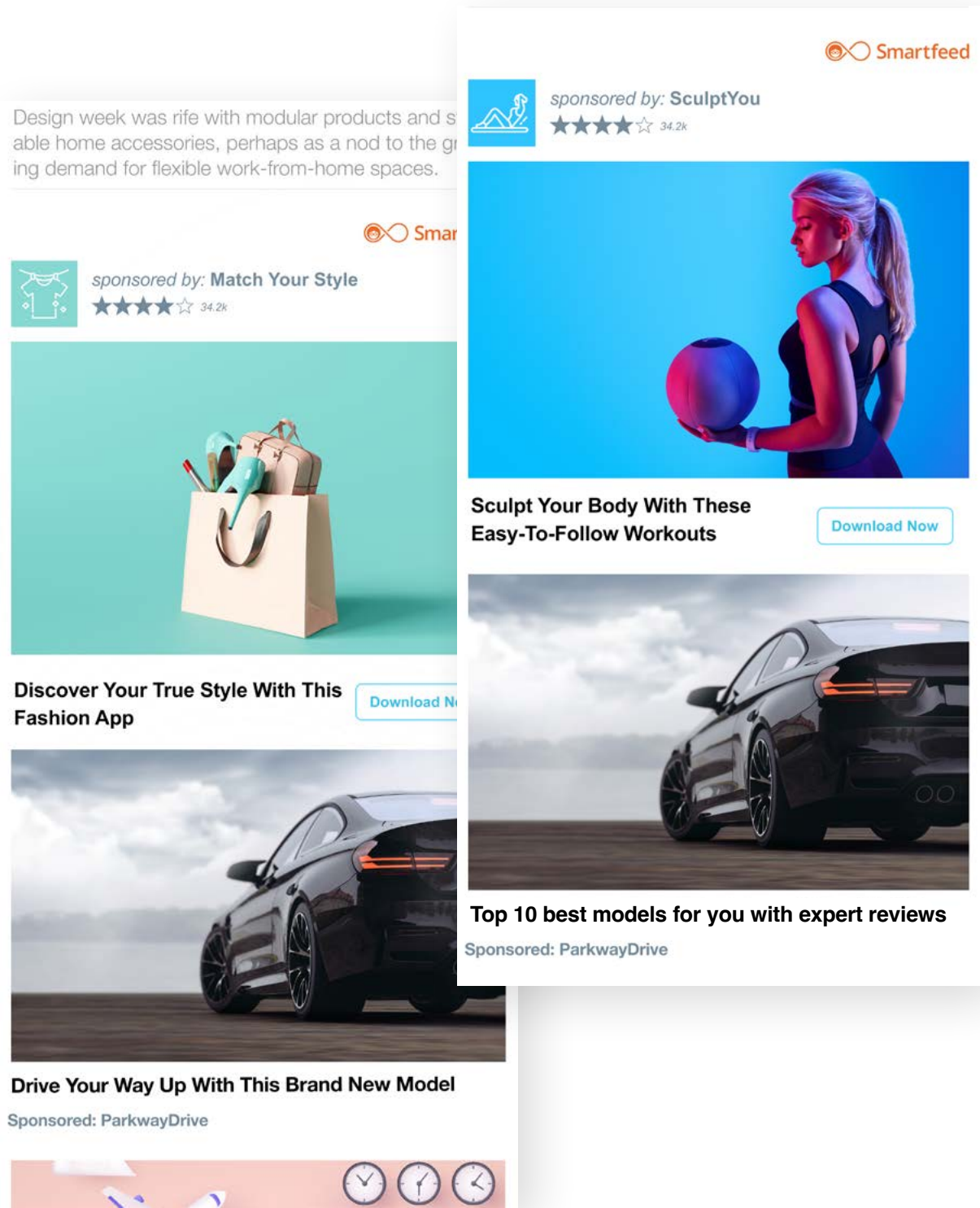
Sports equipment, smart  
devices, diverse consumers,  
beauty products



Support your creative journey with **Outbrain Brand Studio**. Our dedicated team builds upon Outbrain's wealth of interest data, creative, and behavioral insights to customize solutions to your challenges, and reach audiences in the most meaningful ways on the open web.

Titles

Now that you’ve captured audience attention, it’s up to your ad title to generate the click. Sparking curiosity and intrigue can deliver more clicks, but that's not enough to lead to the conversion you want to achieve.



Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
<p>Include your target audience in the headline to prequalify users without reducing scale</p> <p>Use at least 3-5 different title variations</p> <p>Create headlines that are 60 characters or less to avoid your title getting cut off</p>	<p>Avoid using excessive capitalization</p> <p>Ensure headlines are written in a conversational style</p> <p>Use questions to encourage engagement</p>	<p>Use dynamic titles to personalize the user experience</p> <p><i>Dynamic headlines can include location or day of the week</i></p> <p>Include numbers when relevant that capture attention</p> <p>Don’t promise anything in your headlines without a trusted source</p>

Looking for more insights?  
[Sign up to Outbrain Academy to learn more!](#)



# Landing page

When you get the right people onto your landing page, this is where your content closes them to make the sale or desired action.



Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
<p>Make sure your page is loading fast</p> <p>Keep the action above the fold</p> <p>Give your CTA a vibrant color like yellow, red, or orange</p> <p>Limit “click out” opportunities such as pop-up ads that divert from the main goal</p> <p>Use bulleted lists to summarize content</p>	<p>Tailor your landing page for users coming from native ads</p> <p>If you have multiple goals, make sure to reflect that in your pages <i>i.e: For lead gen, drive to sign-up to drive sales, use product or service pages</i></p> <p>If you’re running your campaign on mobile, make sure your website is responsive</p>	<p>A/B test your landing pages for continuous optimization</p> <p>Optimize forms avoiding multiple steps to complete an action</p> <p>When possible, offer users predefined options on the form, instead of manual entry fields</p>

Looking for more insights?  
[Sign up to Outbrain Academy to learn more!](#)

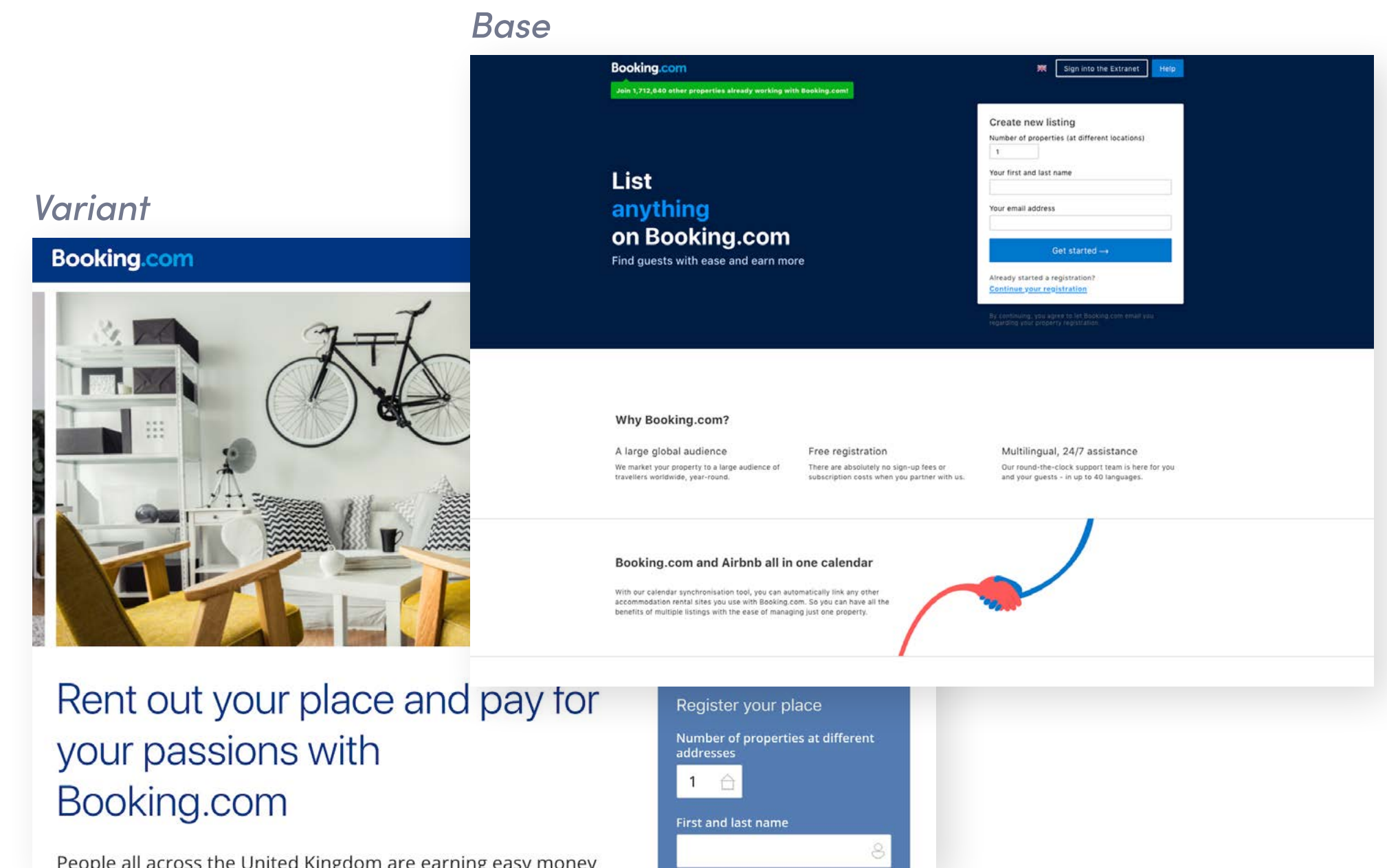
# Case Study

## Booking.com Increases Sign-Ups Through Content Rich Landing Pages

Booking.com initially used landing pages built for paid search in its native Outbrain campaigns. While large volumes of property owners completed the first step of the sign-up process (entering their email) at a good CPL, many of them didn't move further down the funnel to complete registration.

Outbrain created 3 different types of landing page copy for Booking.com, advising them on page layout, the addition of customer testimonials, and a dynamically updated "how much you can earn" function based on geo-location.

Following a 2-week A/B test, Booking.com saw a significant improvement in the number of users completing 25% of the sign-up funnel, as well as users who succeeded in completing the registration process.



35%

Higher CVR  
for Complete Registration

20%

Increase in CVR for Completing  
25% Sign-Up (Entering Email)



# Get Ready for the Holiday Shopping Season

Break down the holiday period in calendar form to stay organized. This year more than any other, it’ll help frame different creatives and strategies for the various events taking place.

While it’s important to be present for the main events, be sure to prepare your content variations ahead of time, testing a mix of generalized and specific campaigns toward your audience.



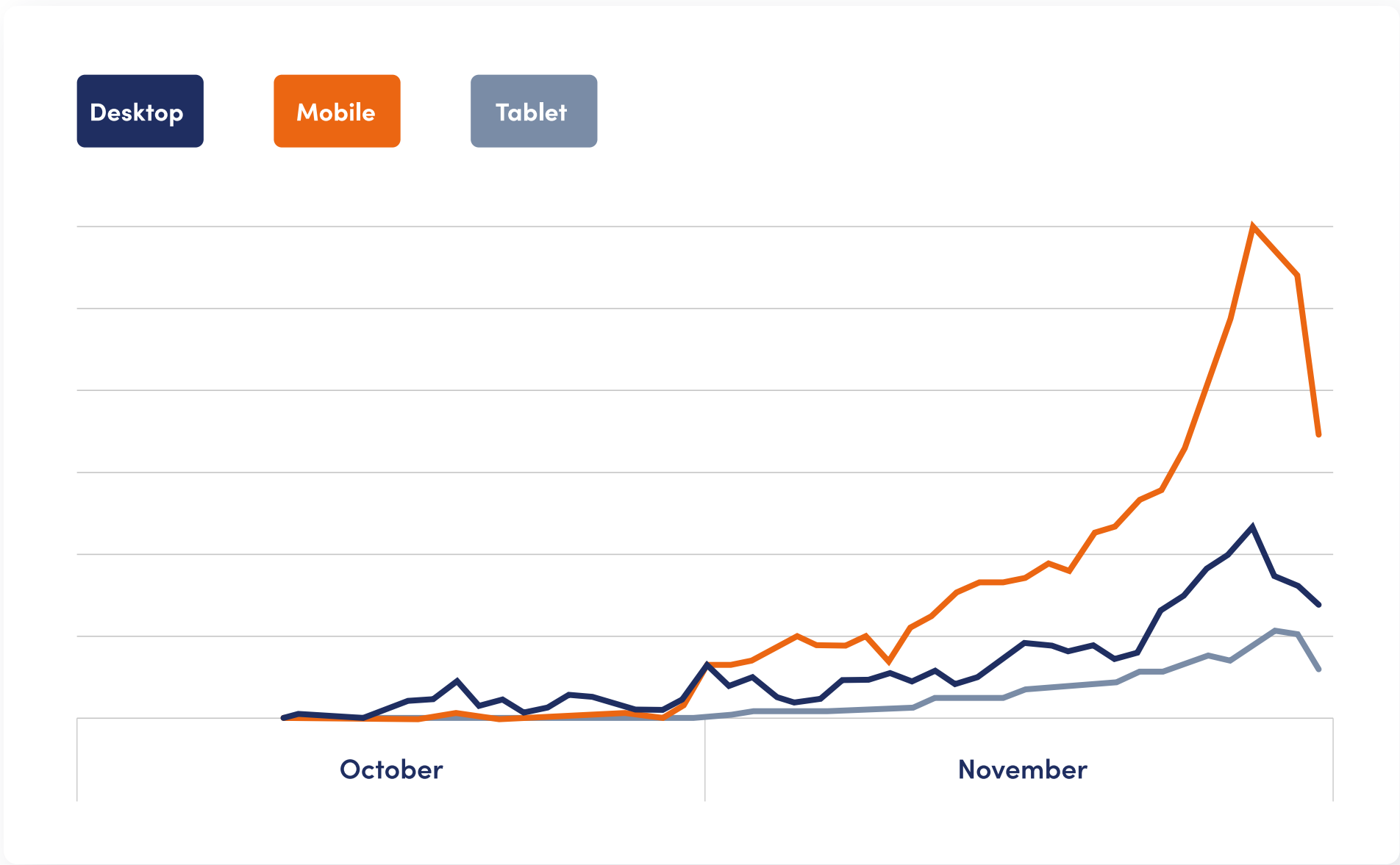
Some dates to keep in mind

Holiday	Date	Countries Impacted
Diwali	October 24	India
Halloween	October 31	US
Single’s Day	November 11	China
World Cup	Nov. 20 to Dec. 18	Global
Thanksgiving	November 24	Global
Black Friday	November 25	US
Small Business Day	November 26	US
Cyber Weekend	November 28	Global
Christmas	December 25	Global
Boxing Day	December 26	UK/Canada/Australia
New Year	January 1	Global
New Year Resolutions	Jan. 1 to Jan. 31	Global

# Outbrain Platform Insights

Speaking of main events, shoppers and brands alike expect big things from Black Friday sales. While it's always a good idea to advertise ahead of time to beat the competition, how you do so across platforms also matters. On Outbrain, mobile has the most impressions, clicks, and spend of all devices that time of year.

Black Friday impressions by platform



Finance	CTR increase	Time period
Investing	26%	Black Friday – New Year
Real Estate	14%	Black Friday – New Year
Banking	24%	Lead up to Black Friday

Retail	CTR increase	Time period
Fashion	31%	Late October – Mid December

Health	CTR increase	Time period
Health/Fitness	28%	Halloween – Black Friday
Men's Health	16%	Black Friday – Cyber Monday
Nutrition	45%	Late August – Early December



# Recommendations to Acquire New Customers

Get going on the below recommendations to maximize your seasonal demand generation.

## Think of the Holidays as a Funnel

Start your holiday campaigns in the months leading up to the big days with minimal spend to gain traction and build audience pools, then go in for the conversion come mid-November to December.

Funnel: October – build awareness;  
November/ December – drive conversions.

## Create Urgency in the Right Moments

Deal days have expanded to weeks these last few years. Encourage immediate action by developing compelling creatives, offering discounts to action-takers, and using countdowns or offer periods. Offer transparency upfront to highlight pricing, delivery times and/or free shipping.

## Create a Consistent Brand Story

As you're preparing your campaign-filled holiday calendar, take a step back and look at the bigger picture. What's your brand story? How can you tell it across multiple channels and touchpoints? Be consistent and provide a clear, compelling story throughout your holiday campaigns.

## Get Personal

Consumers want to feel part of something bigger – a community – especially during the holidays. Dig deep into your creatives to resonate more significantly with the audiences you're looking to convert. The more dynamic the content, the more enticing the experience.

## Target Interests

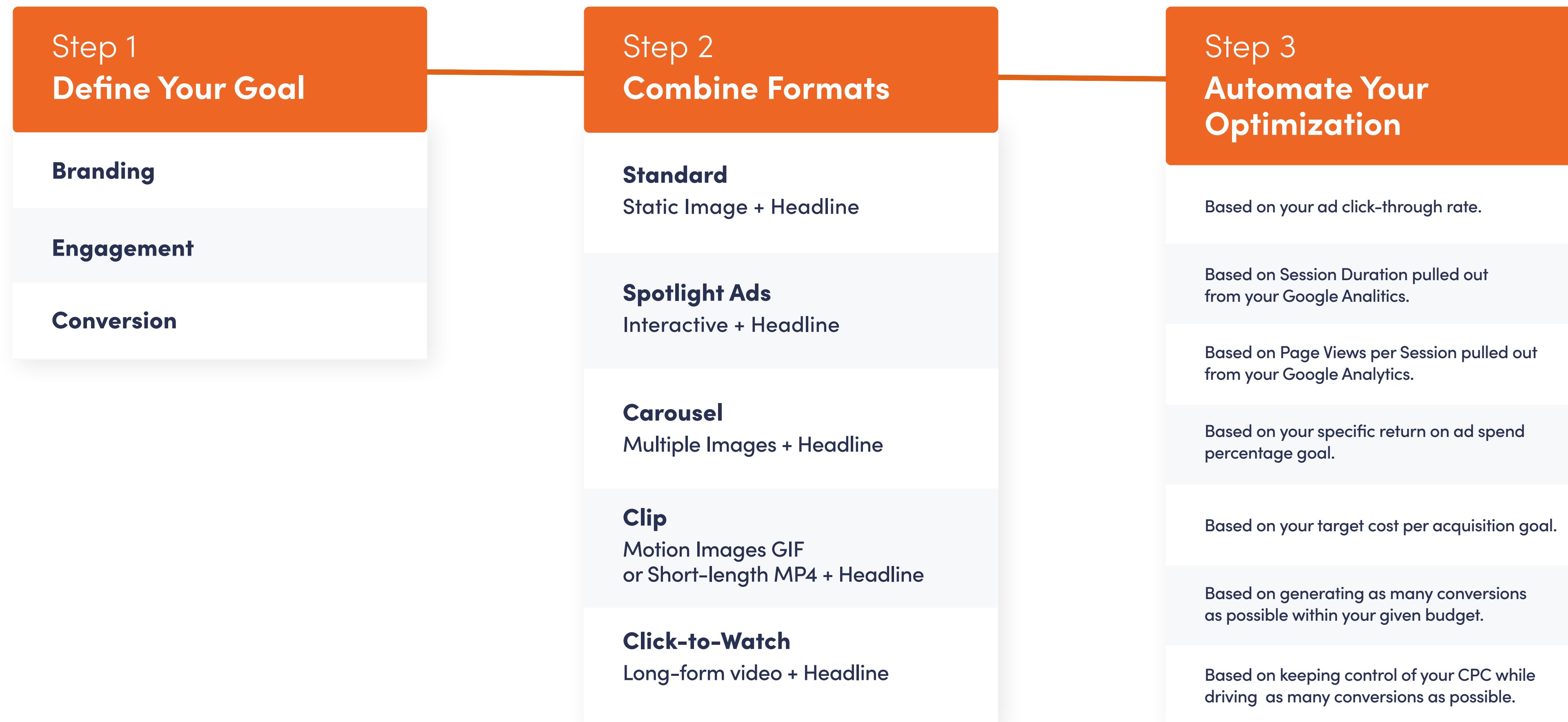
Audience demographics tend to shift during the holidays as customer intent moves to gift-giving. Make sure to target based on real interests to get a better understanding of your new audiences, as your brand can be relevant and engaging to numerous audience types.

Example: People interested in health are also interested in sports, nutrition, entertainment/media, electronics, business & finance.

## Social One-off Successes on Borrowed Time

Is anything different with Instagram's results? With a 30% drop in engagement rate this year, it's becoming even harder to stay efficient in acquiring customers on this platform. The changes implemented to deliver more ads to our personal feeds backfired, prompting a people movement to make Instagram go back to its core. Social one-off successes of holiday campaigns will become harder to achieve, making it a good time to diversify your strategy with new channels to maintain positive ROAS.

# Campaign Planner



[Check Out Outbrain Ad Gallery](#)



# Outbrain Recommendations / Additional Resources

*I want to become performance expert.*

**Outbrain Academy**

*I'm already working with Outbrain but want to take creatives to the next level.*

**Outbrain Brand Studio**

*I want to get more familiar with the Outbrain Dashboard.*

**Amplify Dashboard Webinar**

*I have a campaign running and want to remove manual optimization work from my plate.*

**Bid Strategies**

*I'm ready to set up my campaign for the holiday season.*

**Talk to Sales**



