# Onyx
by Outbrain™

Attention Playbook.

Consumer attention is dwindling.

THE CHALLENGE

Content over-saturation

Consumers' attention levels are dwindling to an all-time low. In fact, average attention on screen has decreased by 69% since 2004[1].

As our world has become saturated with more content and access points than ever before, our minds have been trained to become ad-dodging experts, easily skipping, closing out of, or looking away from brand messages.
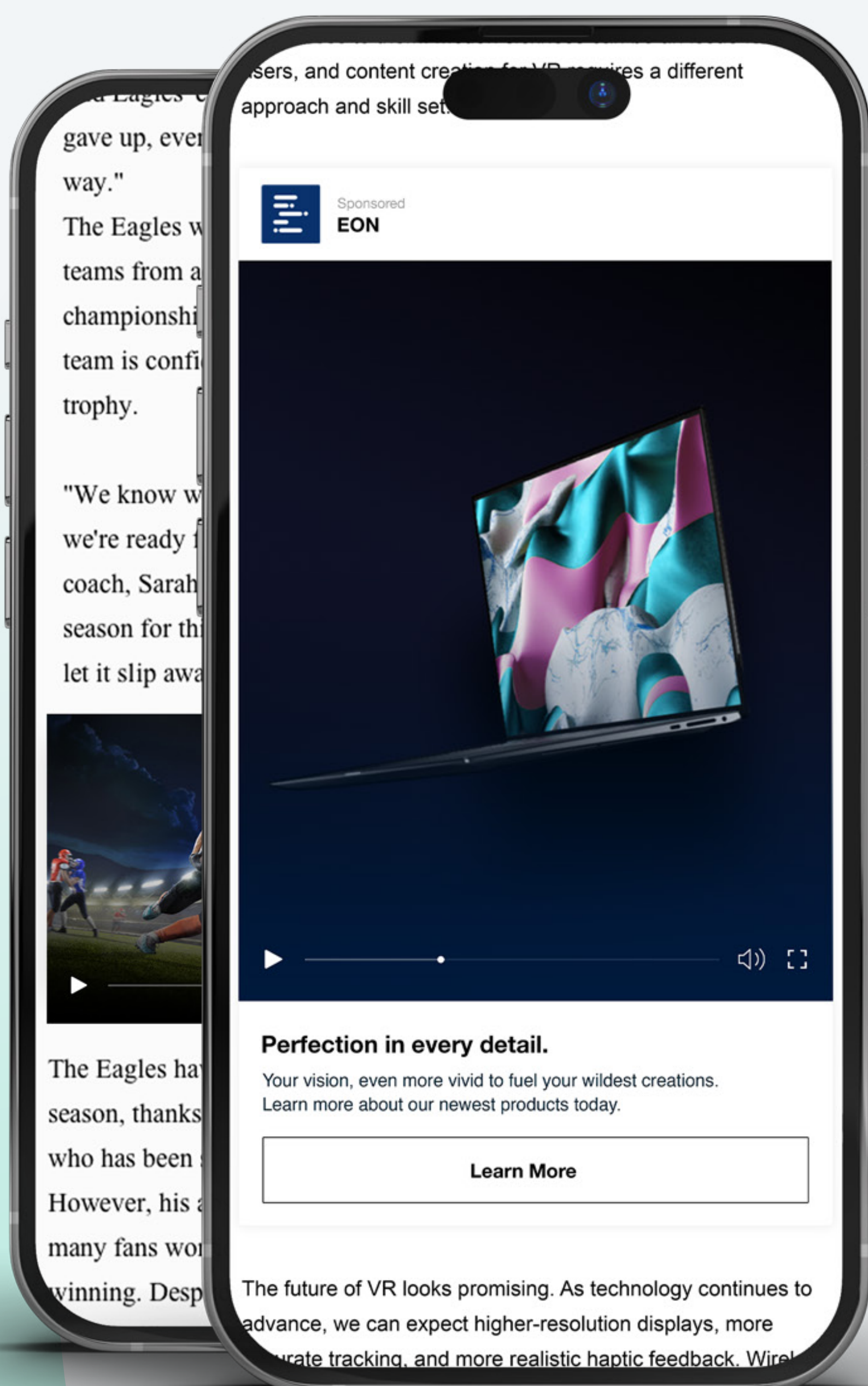
THE SOLUTION

Measuring true focus

Advertisers have long tried to solve the issue of reduced attention by making ads louder and more intrusive or increasing exposure through aggressive retargeting campaigns.

But are these solutions effective?

As attention spans dwindle, there is an ever-growing industry-wide push for measurement tools that go beyond demonstrating a person viewing an ad and, instead, focus on whether they had an opportunity to absorb its messaging.

> It's just not enough to say the impression was delivered or not.
>
> – Ron Amram, Global Media MARS

Understanding advertising's impact on outcomes is more important than ever.

With accelerating fragmentation, cluttered ad spaces, and tracking restrictions, brands are becoming increasingly focused on more deeply understanding campaign effectiveness:

Connecting how impressions correlate to real business ROI.

Views trigger exposure. Attention triggers exploration.

As Google has reported[2], purchase decision-making happens in the "messy middle" — the murky space between the first touchpoint with a brand and conversion. Much of this "middle" occurs as consumers explore content across the open web — and brands are struggling now more than ever to understand the value of those touchpoints.
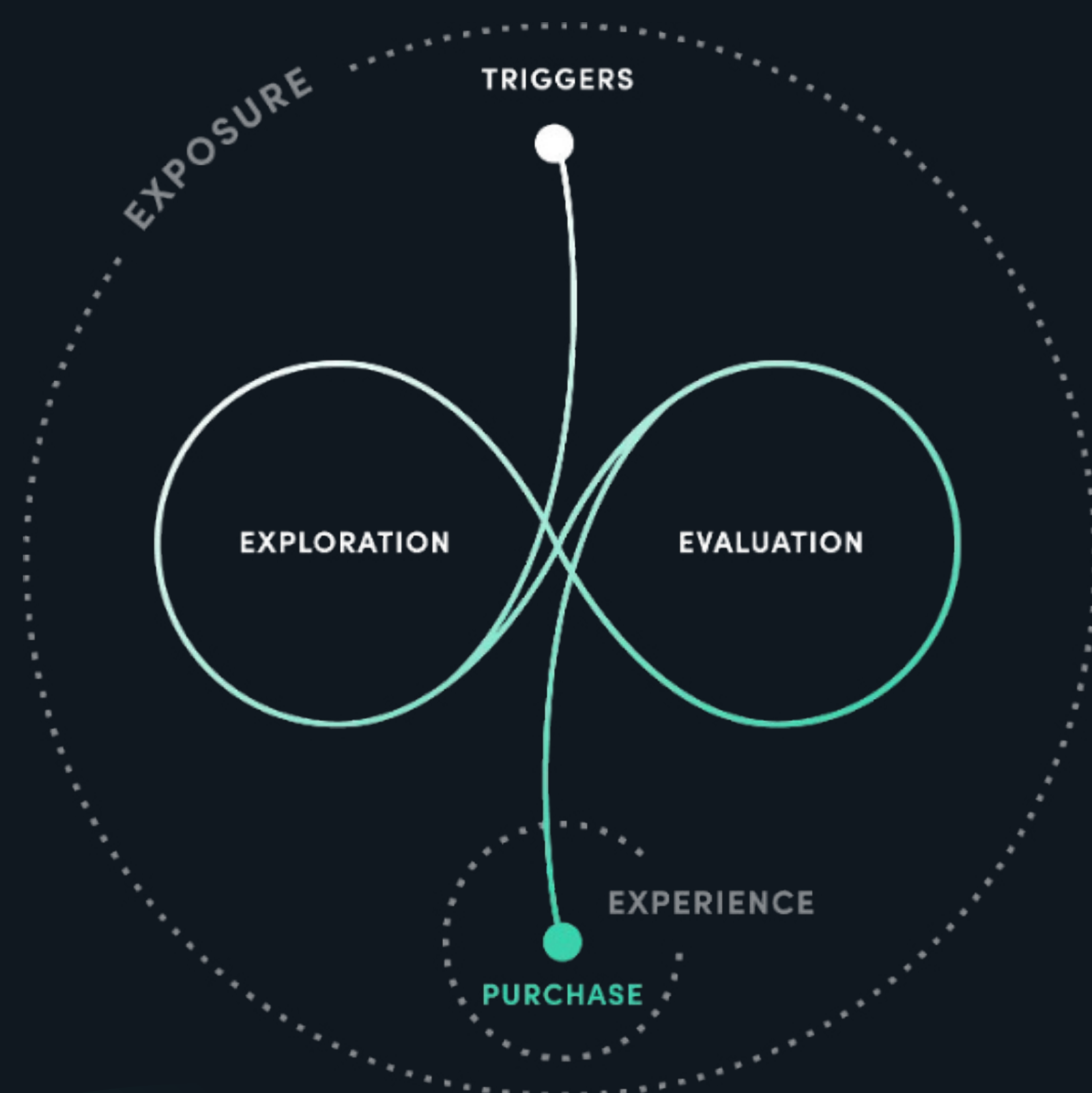
Attention helps predict brand outcomes

Over the years, brands have created various currencies to measure the effectiveness of these touchpoints – reach, viewability, video completion, etc. **Today, the primary currency for digital objectives is viewability** — for an impression to be valuable, you must confirm that someone **actually saw the ad.** However, we're learning that viewability on its own cannot measure real engagement with a brand message or the outcomes that result from that engagement.

Researchers — and advertisers first-hand — have proven attention is a valuable predictor of brand outcomes.

Adelaide's extensive library of case studies[3] contributes to this body of evidence, demonstrating the strong connection between its AU metric and full-funnel outcomes.

A paradigm shift from viewability to attention.

Viewability and reach are good metrics for exposure. But brands need to seed multiple touchpoints of exploration throughout the digital journey. This is where views aren't enough, and brands need to understand real outcomes.

Delivering stronger ROAS

Attention has emerged as a new metric to make sense of the "messy middle" and is gaining momentum as the metric that delivers stronger ROAS than viewability alone.

Research shows high viewability doesn't necessarily correlate to high attention.

Focusing on viewability doesn't guarantee your campaign will get attention, or that it will be effective in influencing actual business results. In fact, Lumen's research[4] has found that high viewability often has an inverse relationship with attention and engagement — said plainly:

High viewability doesn't correlate to high likelihood of attention or action.
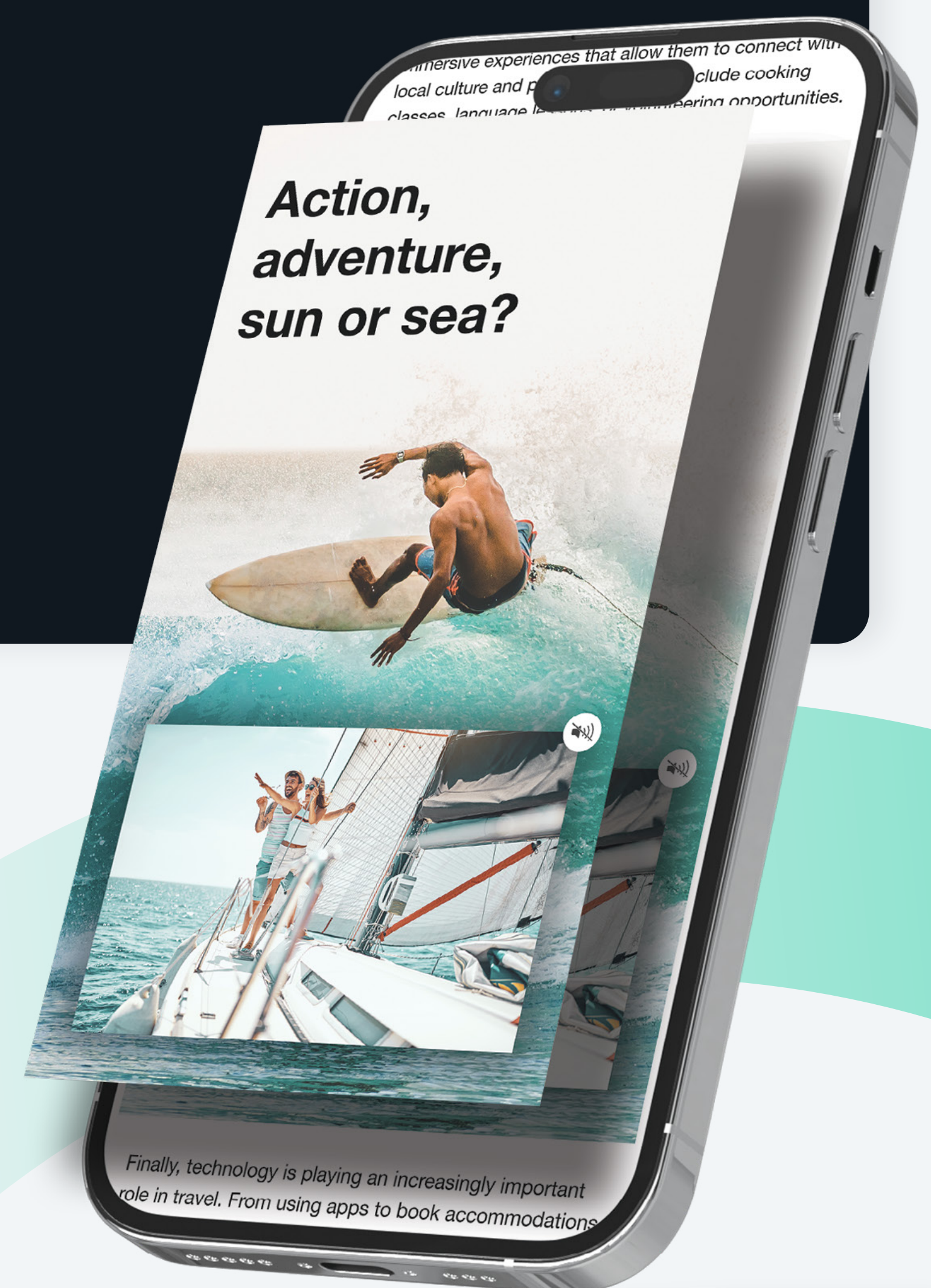
Attention is

7x

more effective than viewability at predicting awareness

6x

more effective than viewability at predicting recall[5]

Action, adventure, sun or sea?

Defining and Measuring Attention.

Defining attention

The Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) describes advertising attentiveness as:

"The degree to which those exposed to the advertising are focused on it – ranging from a very brief exposure (or 'scan') that is likely to leave very little memory trace, to intense focus with cognitive and emotional engagement that can lead to enduring recall and impact attitudes and behavior."

In more simple terms:

Attention is a metric that measures how engaged or focused an individual user is on an advertisement.

Attention is gaining momentum

Advertisers are starting to lean into attention as a better solution in determining the overall efficacy and impact of an ad. Already in the UK, two-thirds of media buyers factor in attention KPIs as part of their digital media strategies.[6]

It's important to remember that attention is new to the game. There is currently no universally accepted definition of attention as a metric Still, while it is not yet a currency in the way of viewability, early predictions indicate it will continue to grow in popularity and adoption. Additionally, Outbrain is part of the IAB working group on attention, helping define industry standards for attention.[7]

Measuring attention

Much like the definition, there are no universally defined ways to measure attention, and there are nuances in attention measurement methodology across the industry.

Across the board, however, attention measurement typically involves multiple data points rather than relying on a single data signal alone. For instance, with Adelaide's approach, these data points, or quality signals, are fed into a machine-learning model, which is trained using outcome data, to determine a placement's probability of capturing the attention of any person to any creative.
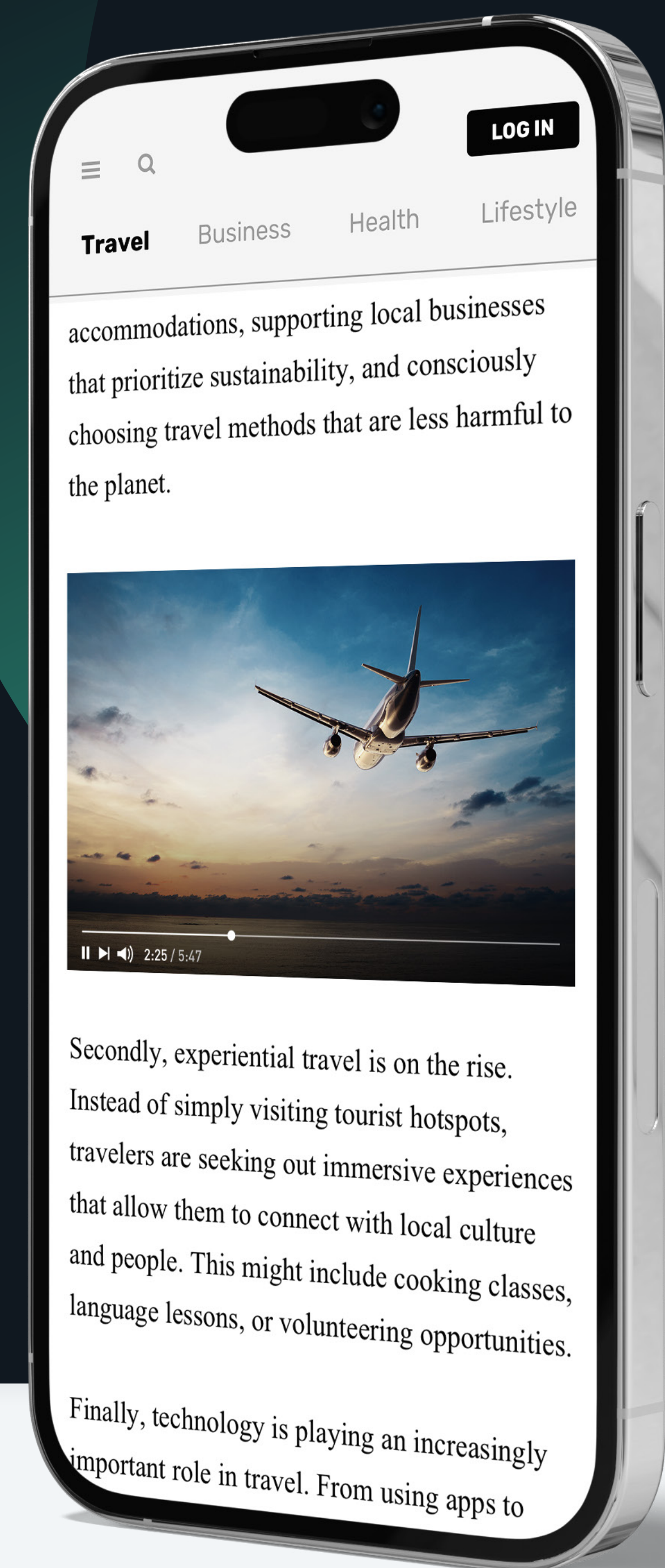
Main data sources

So far, attention is typically measured using a combination of data sources including:

Eye tracking research

Done via panel or lab test with an opted-in group of participants that consent to engage with digital content – including a publisher's owned and operated properties and an advertiser's creative – while eye-tracking cameras trace the path of their gaze around the screen. This is then complemented by surveys at the end to validate memory and attentiveness.

Proxy signals from JavaScript tags

Tags injected into the campaign creative that fire a pixel back to the ad server when the creative appears on screen. This pixel fire can return a number of relevant metrics, including the amount of time a video ad was allowed to play, viewability, time in view, dwell time, contextual alignment, cursor hover time, scroll depth, click-through rate, and audio volume levels.

Creative signals

Some emerging providers specifically measure attention tied to creative. CreativeX[8], for example, has developed the Creative Quality Score metric for brands to measure content effectiveness via their creative tag. This tag identifies various creative elements (aspect ratio, CTA, video lengths, etc.) and tracks the incorporation of platform best practices in brands' creative assets.

Driving efficiency by predicting attention.

Proving media's true value

2023 has been called "The Year of Efficiency"[9] by several corporate leaders including Mark Zuckerburg of Meta and Jim Farley of Ford.

Attention metrics can improve not only the efficacy and impact of digital advertising but can also be used as a powerful metric to evaluate ad effectiveness and ad efficiency at a crucial time when proving media's true value is more important than ever.

> As attention can evaluate the likelihood of real engagement and outcomes at the placement level, advertisers stand to gain an incredible advantage of driving brand outcomes for less spend.
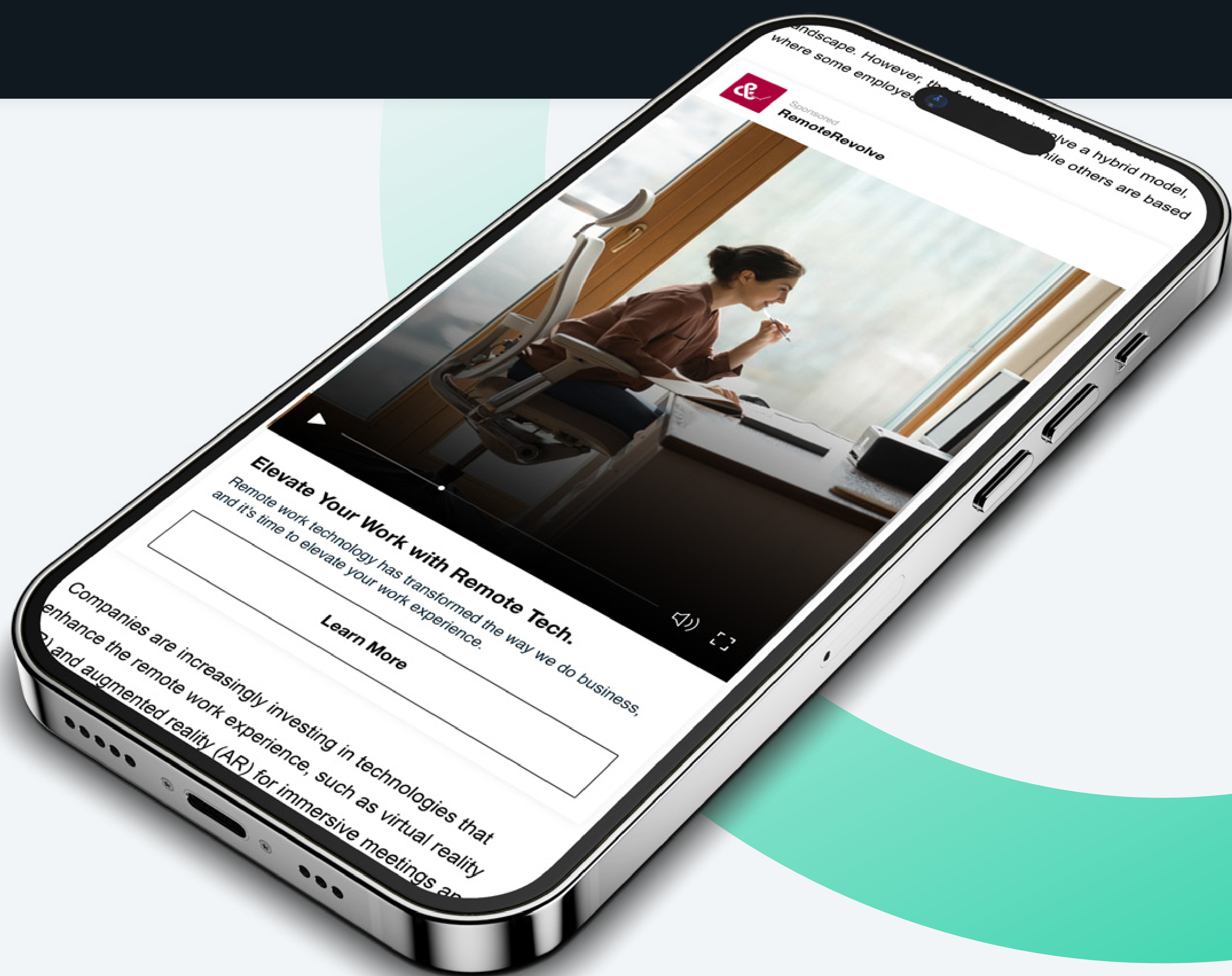
Attention-optimization increase efficiency

Adelaide has demonstrated that optimizing to attention increases efficiency versus optimizing to viewability.

Adelaide

Indexed ad spend for equal sales ROI

$100K	
$90K	
$80K	
$70K	
$60K	**13.33% LOWER**
$50K	
Viewability	Adelaide

Indexed ad spend for equal brand lift

$100K	
$90K	
$80K	
$70K	
$60K	**27.63% LOWER**
$50K	
Viewability	Adelaide

Source [10]

Attention metrics used for efficiency are also taking center stage in working towards the most important initiative in our industry today: sustainability within the programmatic advertising ecosystem.

Adelaide, while working with sustainability ad-tech firm Scope3, has highlighted the value of attention metrics as a means of reducing carbon emissions from digital campaigns. As seen in their study, there is a link between optimizing for attention, and reduced carbon emissions due to less impression wastage.

Results:
The portion of the campaign running on media optimized to Adelaide's AU created 14% fewer total emissions. It also delivered better business outcomes, with 7% more awareness than the viewability-optimized segment.[11]

A paradigm shift from viewability to attention.

1

Don't wait

Don't wait for standardization to adopt attention as a core metric in planning and optimization. Now is the time to begin learning, testing hypotheses, and putting validated methods into practice using attention metrics. Being an early adopter and integrating attention into planning and measurement strategies will lay valuable groundwork for advertisers as adoption continues to surge across the industry.

2

Seek out attention partners and solutions

Work with partners that are already paving the way with attention by offering high-attention solutions and formats and begin testing. Make sure they also work with a measurement partner, such as Adelaide, to measure and validate the attention results they are seeing with their solutions.

3

Optimize creative for high attention

Optimize creative for high attention. Understand the impact that different creative formats have on attention and begin optimizing towards high attention formats and messaging. Winning attention with environment and context is only part of the process. The ad itself needs to hold onto that attention with engaging creative and a message that resonates with each user Outbrain's **Brand Studio** is designed to drive outcomes and insights with audiences. By measuring interaction and attention signals and leveraging global expertise with customer interest and engagement performance, Brand Studio delivers real outcomes for brands.

B NEW SEASON FAVORITES

Neue Style-Inspirationen
für den Frühling

0:02 | 0:10

78% Completion Rate
31% Engagement Rate*
72% Viewability Rate

Engagement Rate Includes: Swipes, Taps, Click-throughs, Video unmutes View-throughs (ad is in-view 100% of ad duration)

A paradigm shift from viewability to attention.

Onyx is high-attention by design

Outbrain is at the forefront of attention, launching Onyx by Outbrain™, our new open web branding platform, designed to maximize consumer attention and drive greater brand impact.
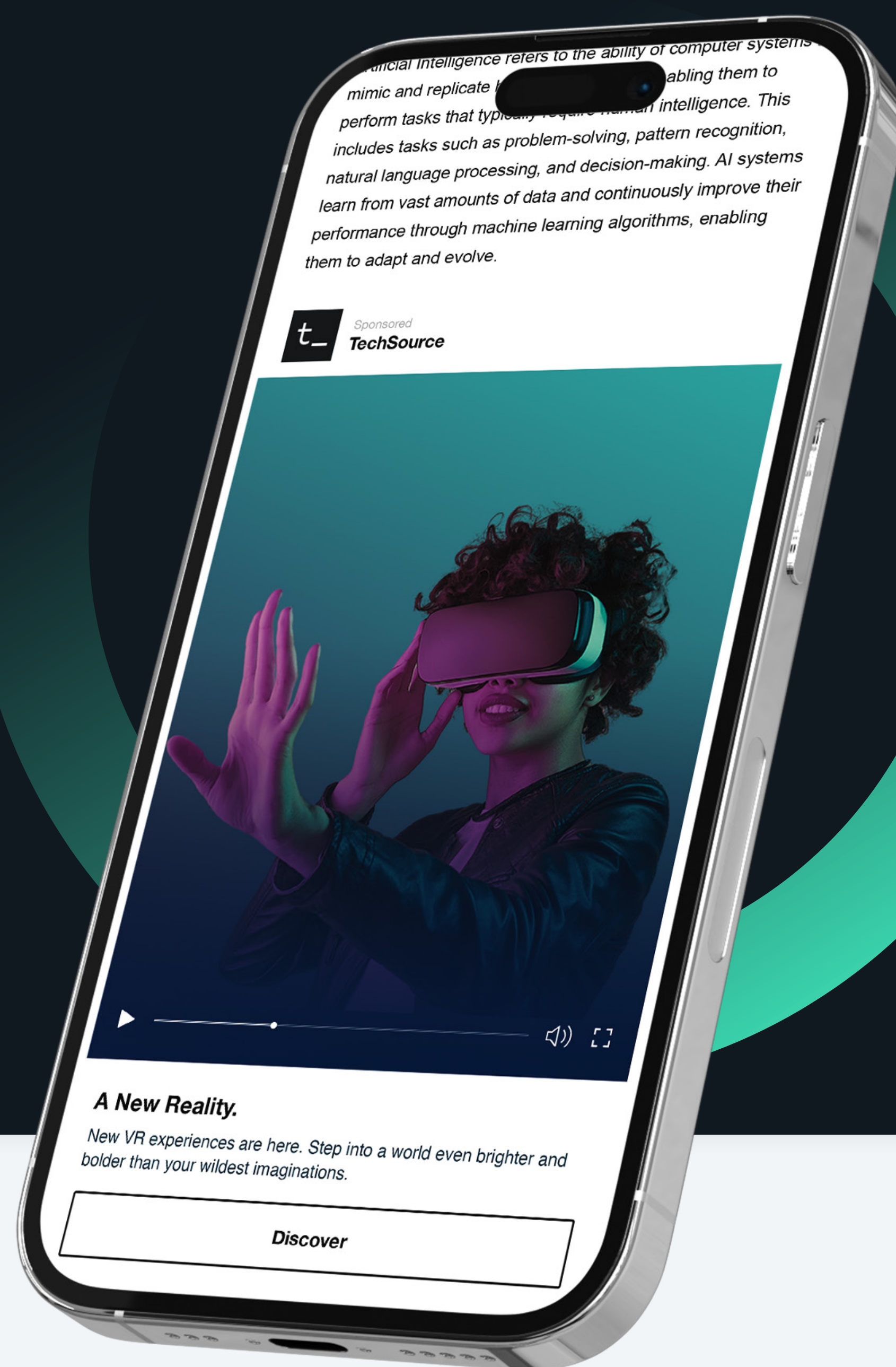
Because Outbrain operates one of the largest canvases of code-on-page inventory on the open web, we have completely unique partnerships with publishers in the sense that we own and operate portions of their site in order to recommend relevant paid and editorial content to their audiences.

Through the news feeds we power exclusively with code-on page, we have 15+ years of data around what people engage with, how context and interest forecast intent, and more to inform our core technology: one of the most advanced prediction engines that optimizes bidding towards moments of high attention and engagement.

Onyx is able to optimize attention through a powerful combination of environment, technology, and experience.

By ingesting 1 billion context and interest signals per minute, Onyx leverages our powerful prediction technology and uses it to predict the moments most likely to drive attention. We then use those moments to run rich, large-format video and display experiences across a dedicated publisher environment within articles.
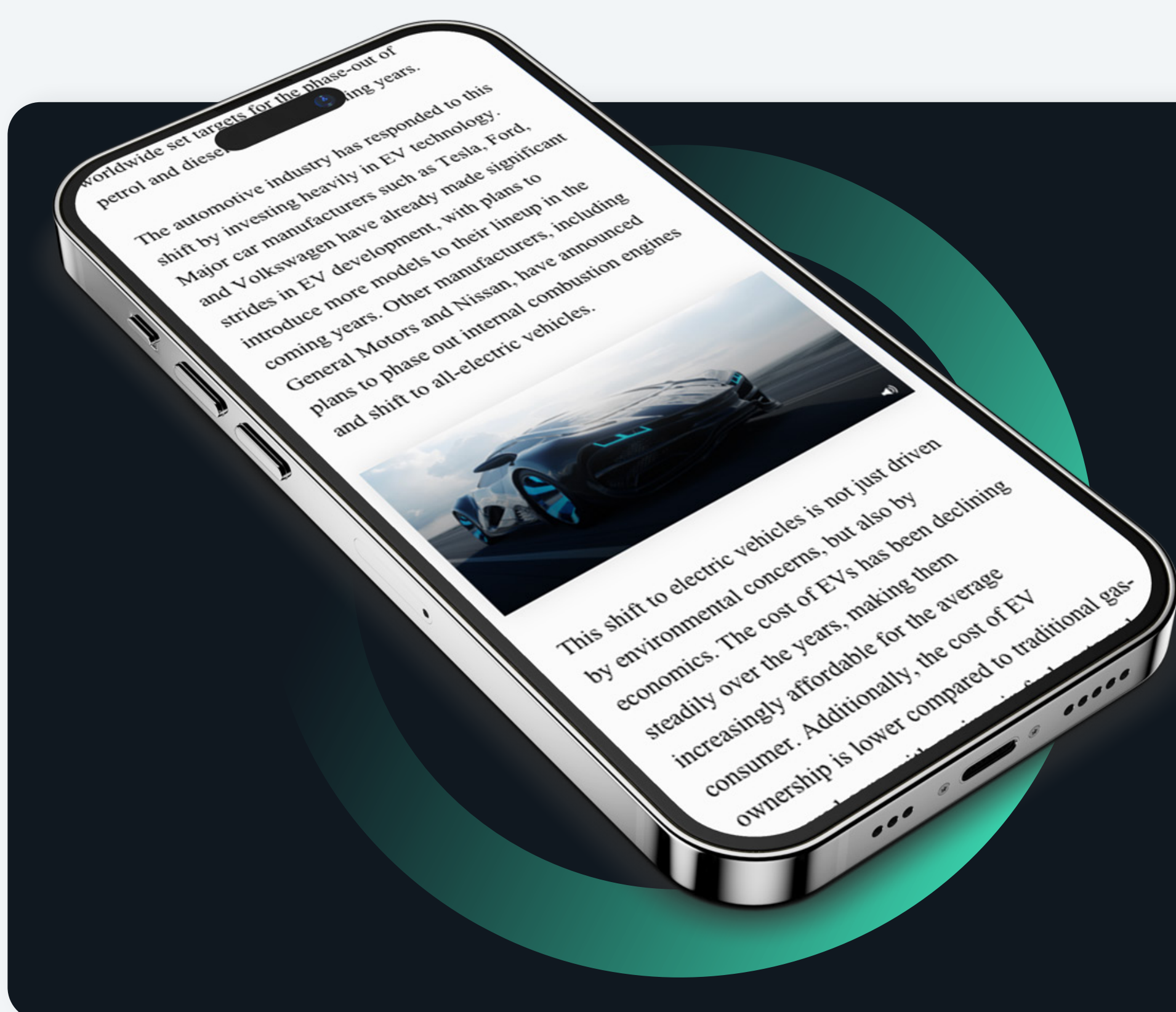
The combination of technology and code-on-page inventory is what allows us to go beyond basic contextual relevance, and actually predict attention.

Through our MVP partner tests, we've already found that the Onyx environment, technology, and experience allow brands to deliver greater attention than what's common across the open web – as measured and verified by Adelaide.

Early results show that Onyx surpassed AU attention benchmarks for display and rich media formats by 26%, and scored higher than mobile banners by 53%.
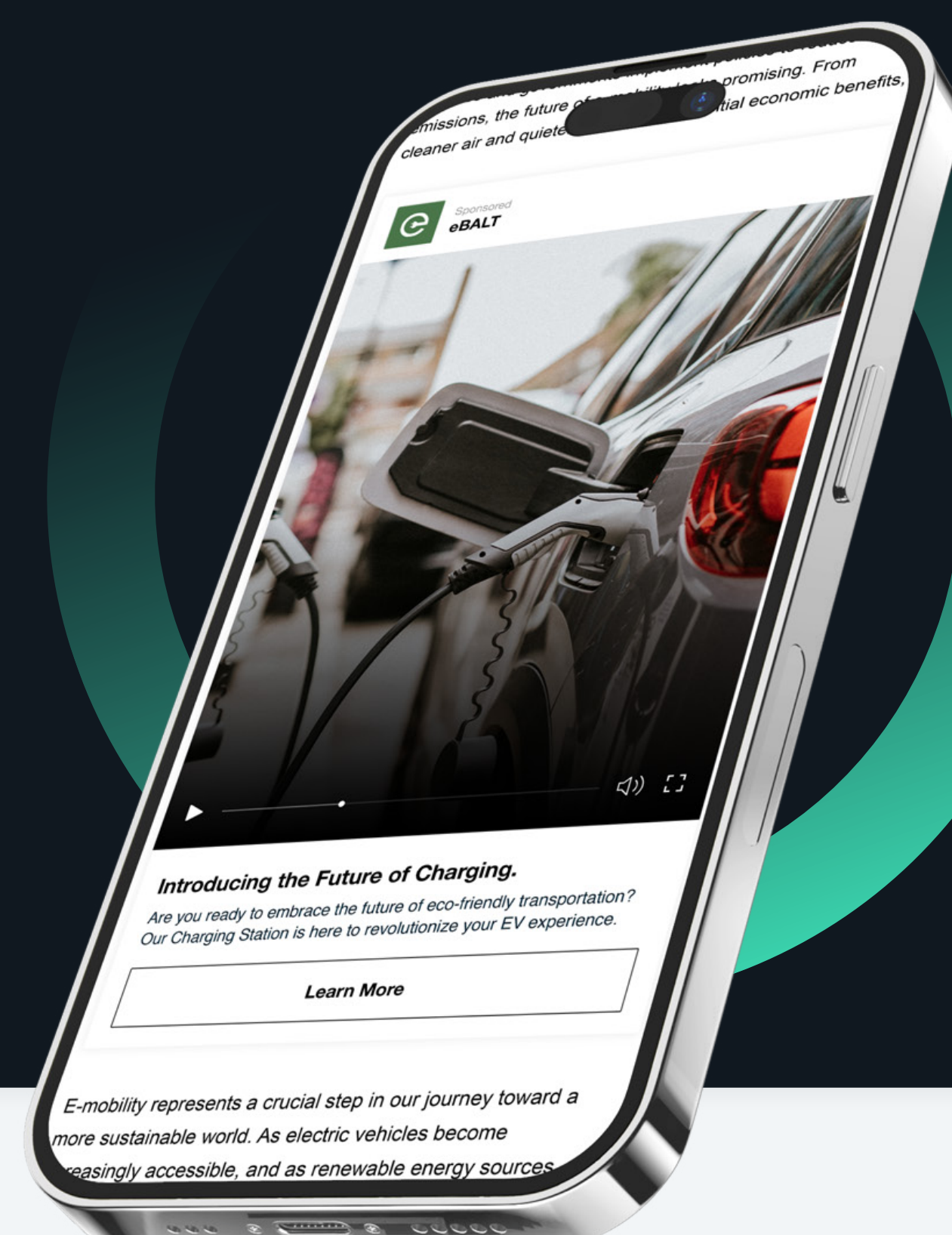
Get started with attention-first advertising.

We're paving the way for a better open web advertising experience by predicting moments of high attention using years of deep contextual insights. Reach out to us for attention–first advertising solutions.

www.outbrain.com/onyx

Sources.

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[4] https://lumen-research.com/pr/lumen-releases-report-from-pwc-on-the-roi-of-attention-technology/

[5] https://playgroundxyz.com/whitepaper.pdf

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