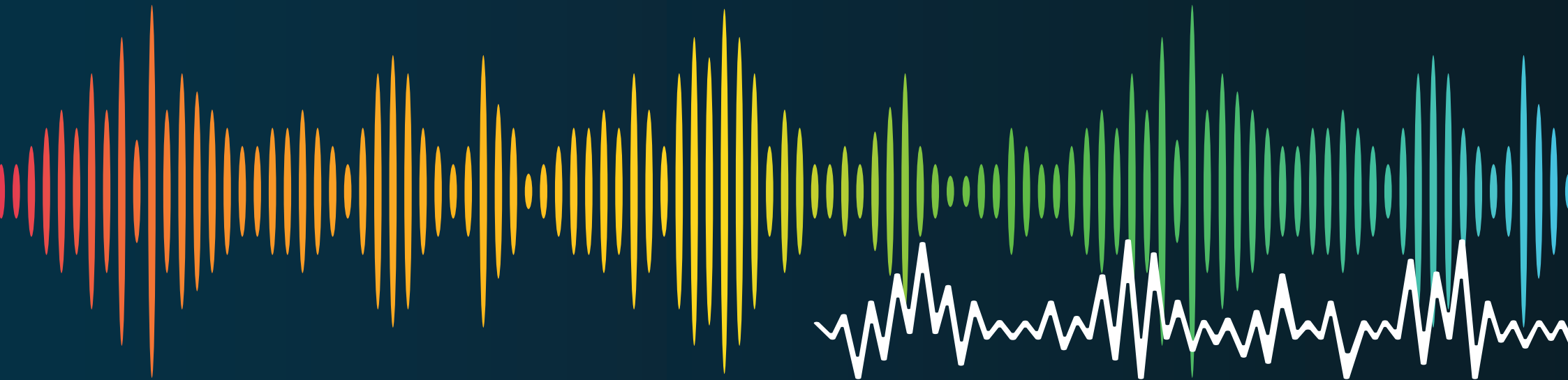




Australian Digital Advertising 2025 Pulse Check



Executive summary

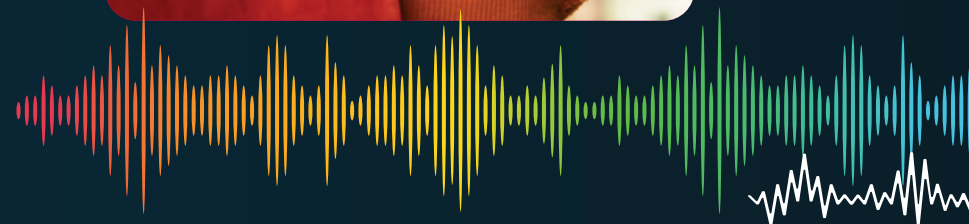
In recent years there has been much media industry commentary as well as increased regulatory scrutiny on cookie-based advertising that exploits personal data and previous browsing activity - something which many consumers have come to regard as invasive and overreaching.

With 2024 now behind us, this report reveals exactly how consumers currently feel about their data being collected and used to serve them ads, and where their preferences lie as the nature of digital advertising continues to evolve. Among many key insights for marketers, one of the clearest findings is that **people prefer more privacy-conscious advertising methods**, such as contextual advertising, which aligns with a consumer's mindset without taking advantage of their personal data.

Overall, the results are illuminating and can help marketers provide advertising creative that resonates with consumers in ways that are non-invasive, relevant and, above all, privacy-conscious.

METHODOLOGY

The research that informs this report was conducted by Censuswide, with 1,003 Consumers in Australia, aged 18+ between 25.10.2024 – 28.10.2024. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society, which is based on the ESOMAR principles. Censuswide is also a member of the British Polling Council.



Let's start from the top: people are genuinely concerned about protecting their data

We live in a highly interconnected world where our daily interactions increasingly happen digitally. From the messaging platforms we use to speak to friends and family to the highly optimised apps we employ to shop or stream video, our online footprint is now substantial.

While modern technology has greatly enabled us and created untold efficiencies, the opportunity cost for consumers has often required them to part with large quantities of their data - something that can create a strong sense of unease.

Little wonder then that the vast majority of people believe that protecting their personal data is now a major priority.



82%

say **protecting personal data** when brands serve them ads is **important**.



58.7%

say **protecting personal data** when brands serve them ads is **extremely important**.



23.3%

say **protecting personal data** when brands serve them ads is **somewhat important**.



Just 3%

believe protecting personal data is **not an important consideration**.



But there are nuances when it comes to how consumers feel about the use of their data regarding advertising



42.7%

said they are **not interested in receiving personalised ads** and don't want their data shared at all.



23.1%

would like to be **served relevant ads while having their personal information protected** as much as possible.



15.2%

are willing to **share a certain amount of data** as long as the ads they're shown are highly relevant.



9.7%

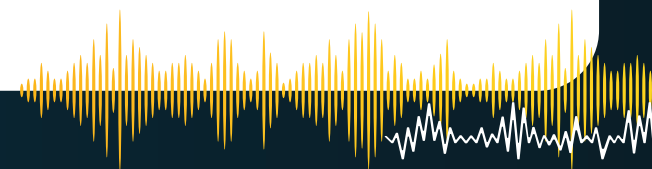
of respondents who said as long as **ads they are shown are relevant**, they **don't care how their data is used**,

Smashing the cookie jar

According to Google, cookies are ‘small pieces of text sent to your browser by a website you visit, helping that website remember information about your visit.’ Cookies have been around in one form or another since the dawn of the internet age, but in recent years have come under greater scrutiny owing to their ability to track online habits and behaviour.

As consumer awareness has grown around how businesses collect information about people online, there has been a rise in negative sentiment about their use – a finding clearly borne out by GumGum’s latest research.

Just short of half of all respondents (48.1%) have a negative view of cookies, with 24.9% saying they do not respect the consumer and should be stopped, while 23.2% said they create a sense of discomfort and an alternative would be preferable.



Seller beware! The vast majority of consumers are firmly against invasive ads

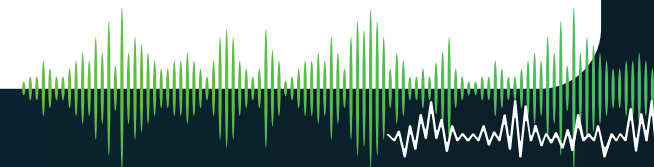
For advertisers, there is a tightrope to be walked between accurately targeting their audiences and ensuring content doesn't come across as creepy or untoward.

For marketers, it's a strong indication that a respectful and thorough approach to serving ads is likely to keep more potential customers on side.



Consumer attitudes towards invasive ads

-  **75%** of consumers consider **overly invasive advertising to be a strong negative.**
-  **42.3%** found themselves **questioning how brands have so much of their data.**
-  **35.5%** have increased their resolve to **protect their data more closely.**
-  **60.8%** feel **unhappy when ads target them on a personal level** (e.g, relationships, health).
-  **41.3%** view personally **targeted ads as a violation of privacy.**



Pigeonhole at your peril

It should probably come as no surprise that ads that stereotype consumers or make them feel uncomfortable can have a detrimental effect on the brand producing them. And there are clear consequences for brands that get their advertising wrong.



52%

of respondents said they had been targeted by an ad that **pigeonholed or stereotyped them in an offensive way.**



48%

of respondents said the ads they were served **consistently seemed to be appropriately tailored.**

There are 3 camps for consumers who felt pigeonholed by ads:



26.8% were more forgiving, saying the ad **felt more clumsy than malicious.**



13% said the ad **didn't particularly bother them**

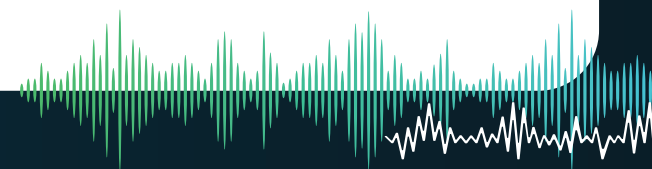


12.2% said the ad **missed the mark entirely.**



56.2%

are very likely (21.6%) or somewhat likely (34.6%) to **stop using a brand's services** if it's ad felt invasive or too personal.



Contextual relevance correlates strongly with a lift in trust

It's no secret brands that earn consumers' trust are invariably those that perform better in the long term. Where advertising is concerned, in today's media landscape where increasingly switched-on consumers are the norm, the importance of maintaining trust can't be understated.

And there's good news for those who serve their ads in highly relevant audience environments. GumGum's research revealed that Australian consumers place a higher degree of trust in contextually relevant advertising when compared to the increasingly maligned identity-based advertising.



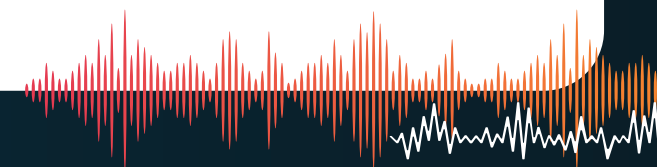
33.2%

said their trust would rise somewhat (26.6%) or greatly (6.6%), while 52.4% said trust would neither increase nor decrease.



2x

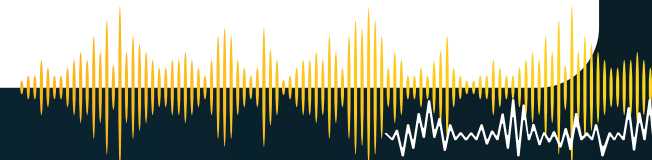
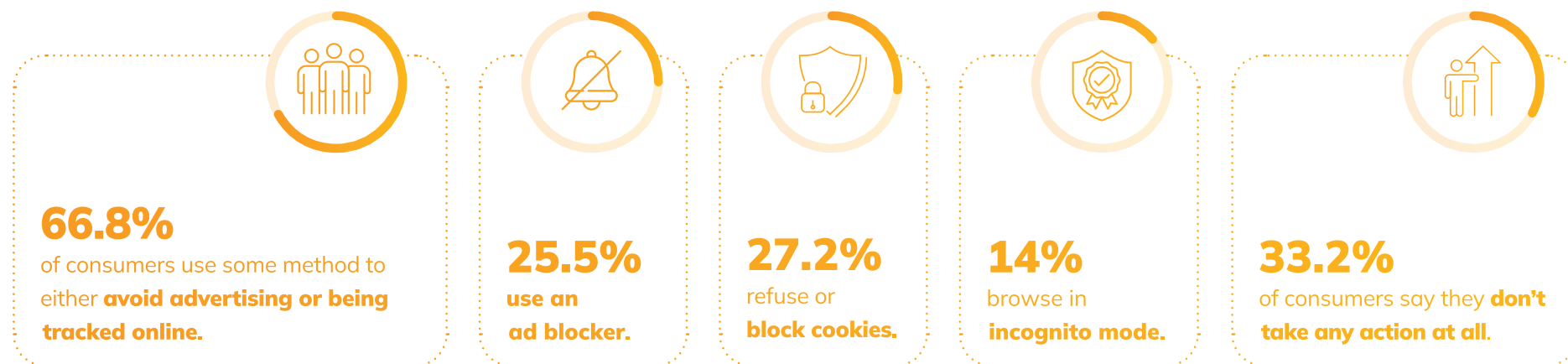
more consumers say their **trust in brands would rise when shown contextually relevant ads** compared to those who say it would decrease.



Brands should be aware of how Aussies are protecting themselves from advertising

While many respondents have shown a degree of apathy towards digital advertising, it's notable that many do take measures to avoid exposure to it.

The evidence shows that people are collectively becoming more savvy about online tracking, and increasingly hard to reach. The upshot for brands is that they need to ensure when they serve ads they are meeting people in the right context and right mindset to capitalise on the opportunity, while also not alienating their audience.



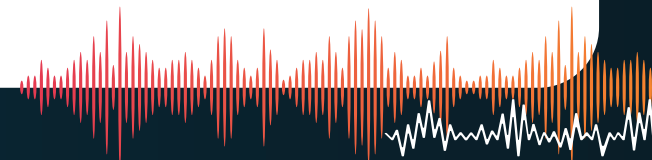
There's no doubt about it: context is king

You might be catching up on stats from the football game you missed and you're served an ad for a piece of fan apparel you didn't know you needed. Or maybe you're watching some fashion try-ons and are served up a great deal for your new favourite dress.

Whatever the scenario, for Australian consumers, contextually relevant advertising is clearly favoured over the traditional identity-based variety. This finding can provide advertisers with a very strong lead.

Consumer attitudes towards contextual ads

- 31.9% said they would **pay more attention** to them.
- 48.9% said they would **pay the same amount of attention**.
- 50% say they would be **more likely to engage with ads that are relevant** to the content they are viewing (17.9%) or if they genuinely align with their interests (32.1%).
- 33.8% said they were **not interested in ads** they are served.
- 3x** as many people **prefer contextually relevant ads** to the alternative.



Finding the magic bullet for ads that resonate is tricky

Despite ever-improving and more privacy conscious platforms, serving advertising to consumers is always going to be something of an inexact science.

This fact was borne out when Australian consumers were asked to describe how they felt when an ad resonated with them. The largest cohort (35.3%) said that they've never been served an ad that genuinely resonates, but for the remainder, the results were mixed.

If there's a lesson here for marketers, it's that while serving up something genuinely timely is a hard trick to pull off, there is a need to have a consistent presence, without being intrusive.



20.3%

said it was an ad for **something they'd never considered but it instantly appealed** – which calls to mind the old marketer's adage of surprising and delighting their customers.



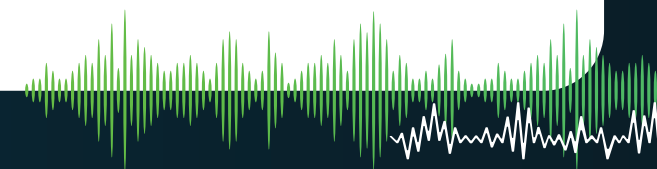
18.3%

of respondents said it was an ad for **something they needed exactly at that moment.**



15.2%

said they simply **happened to be in a good mood and clicked** and 10.9% said it was an ad for something they've wanted for a long time.



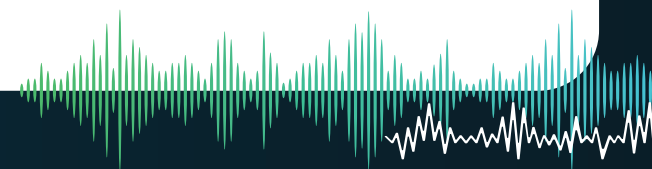
Timing things perfectly

Context for consumers is about more than where they are viewing their content. It's also about their social and economic circumstances, not to mention the time of day they view content.



Nearly half (48%) said there was no specific time of day when ads would be most relevant to them. This figure was almost the same when people were asked about the best time of day to be served an ad, with 51% of consumers saying they had no preference.

However, the evening proved more popular for the remainder with 17.8% saying post 5pm pre-dinner was their peak receptivity and 11.5% saying later at night, before bed was best. By contrast, 12.3% said during the day around lunch or when taking a break and 7.6% said in the morning hours was their preferred time.



Key takeaways for marketers



Data protection is a major concern for Australian consumers and marketers must ensure they are creating advertising that respects the privacy of individuals as a first consideration.



Advertisers need to tread carefully to **avoid alienating people who receive their ads** – doing so risks turning them off for good.



It's crystal clear that **contextual advertising is widely favoured by consumers** over traditional identity-based advertising.



For marketers, leaning into platforms that deliver ads to consumers at the **right place and in the right mindset**, in a non-invasive way, is the key to ensuring a competitive advantage.



About us

GumGum is the ad tech company redefining the future of advertising.

We're empowering brands to connect with their audience in the perfect mindset—no personal data required. Our cutting-edge platform seamlessly delivers Contextual, Creative, and Attention solutions at scale, in every digital environment.

Founded in 2008 and based in Santa Monica, we're transforming the way brands engage across 19 global markets.

Our Vision

Shape meaningful connections in the digital world for everyone, everywhere

Our Mission

Empower advertisers to capture their audience's attention without personal data across current and future emerging digital environments at scale.

Our Values

Agility, Grit, Thoughtfulness



Want to learn more about meeting your audience in the right place and in the right mindset?

Click here to discover why The Mindset Graph is your marketing team's new best friend.



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