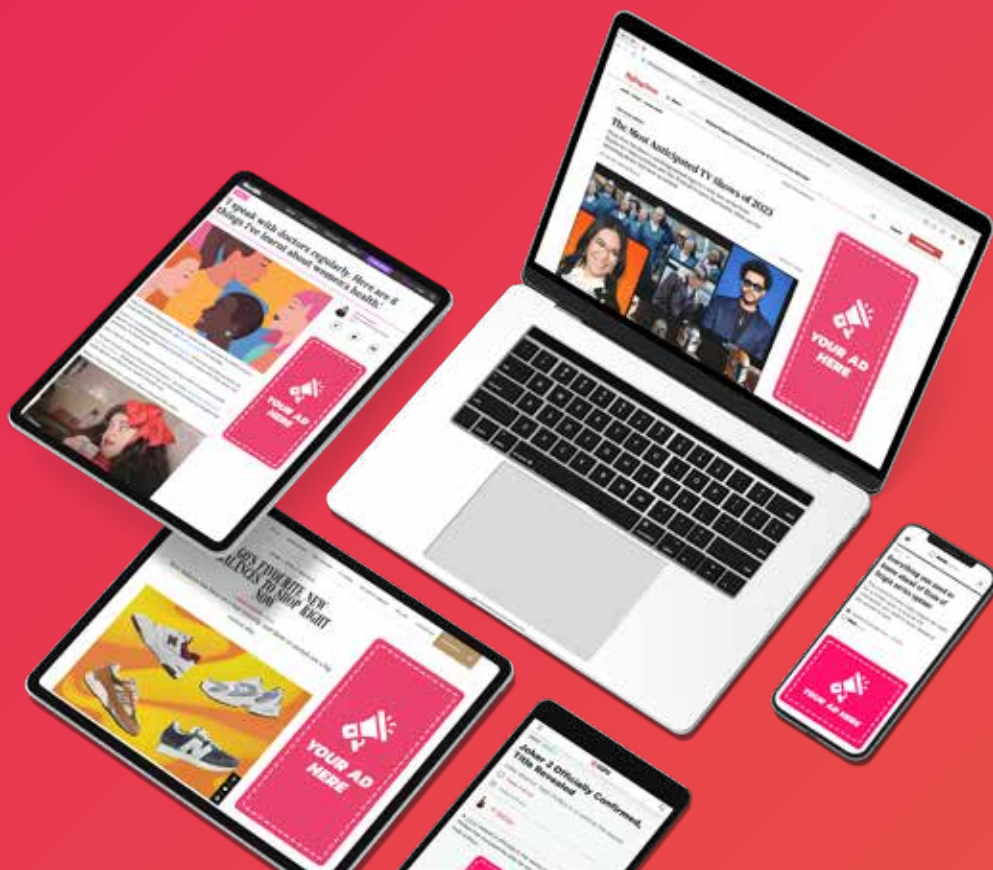PLAYGROUND XYZ

Context, creative and attention

Using attention signals as a feedback loop for context-advertisement alignment

An introduction from Playground xyz

Despite yet another delay, the death of third party cookies remains imminent and the resurgence of contextual advertising will continue. The promise of an identifier-free, privacy-forward way to deliver ads at scale is certainly appealing but contextual approaches still have some challenges to overcome. Fundamentally, these challenges rest around the difficulty in identifying the best contexts to serve an ad across for a given brand, where semantics and human bias are able to negatively impact or severely limit ad effectiveness.

So how can we best determine which contexts are the right ones to serve an ad? And how can we better guide the decisions?

A growing body of research from leading attention experts has shown the positive relationship between greater attention and both brand and performance outcomes. We ourselves have long theorised that Attention Time (the length of time, in seconds the ad is looked at) could be the missing feedback loop to supercharge contextual approaches.

To investigate this theory further, we engaged in the world's largest structured research project into the relationship between ad creative, context and attention.

In the following document we give an overview of the findings. For more detail, you can download the full report by scanning the QR code below.

We hope you find it as interesting as we do.

Methodology

Large scale measurement was recorded across 59 advertisers, 683 creatives, 2,263 domains, 26,006 unique URLs and over 27 Million impressions during the period 18th of February to 3rd of March 2022.

59
advertisers

683
creatives

2,263
domains

26,006
URLs

27M
impressions

2.1s
Attention Time

1.3s
Attention Time

AIP Attention Intelligence Platform

verity™

The attention data for this study was collected via our Attention Intelligence Platform, which uses an opt-in panel based eye tracking data fused with AI models to measure Attention Time on the ads.

The context was determined using VerityTM: an AI-based natural language processing and image recognition engine developed by GumGum.

Combining data from these two technologies across the large scale data set allowed us to confidently draw conclusions about the relationship between creative, context and attention.

10:30
playground.xyz
Daily Play
Financial Market Predictions - Q2

3.5s
Attention Time
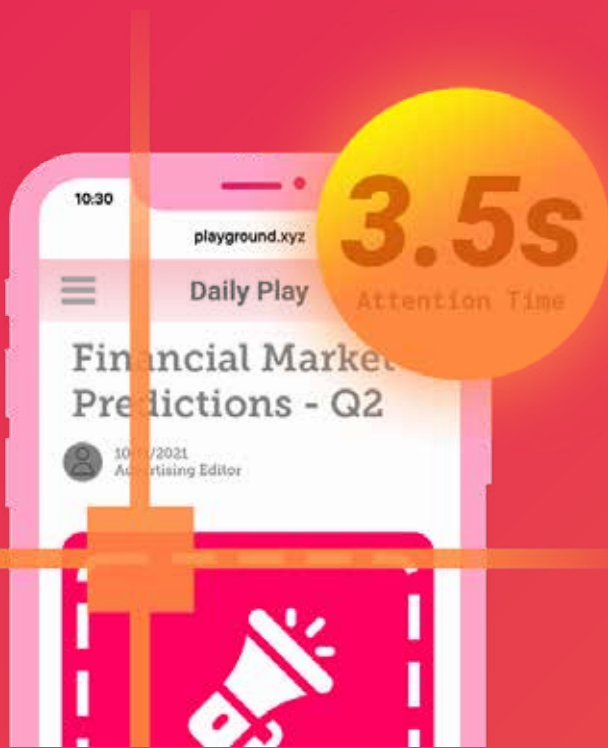
Part 1: Attention Time as a feedback loop on contextual relevance

The primary metric referred to in this paper is Attention Time: the length of time in seconds that an ad was actually looked at. It's a quality-based and inherently human metric, and an incredibly effective indicator of a consumer's relative interest in an advertisement. And as our previous research has shown (scan QR to view), it's highly linked to brand outcomes.

*Illustrative example of ads being served onto the same piece of content*

Allowing advertisers to accurately measure consumer attention is what sets Attention Time apart from other metrics that have otherwise been used as proxies for attention. When compared to Viewability, which only captures whether an ad has had the opportunity to be seen, Attention Time offers far greater indication of ad relevance.

Attention Time is a powerful feedback loop for ad relevance as it's predictive of brand and performance outcomes.
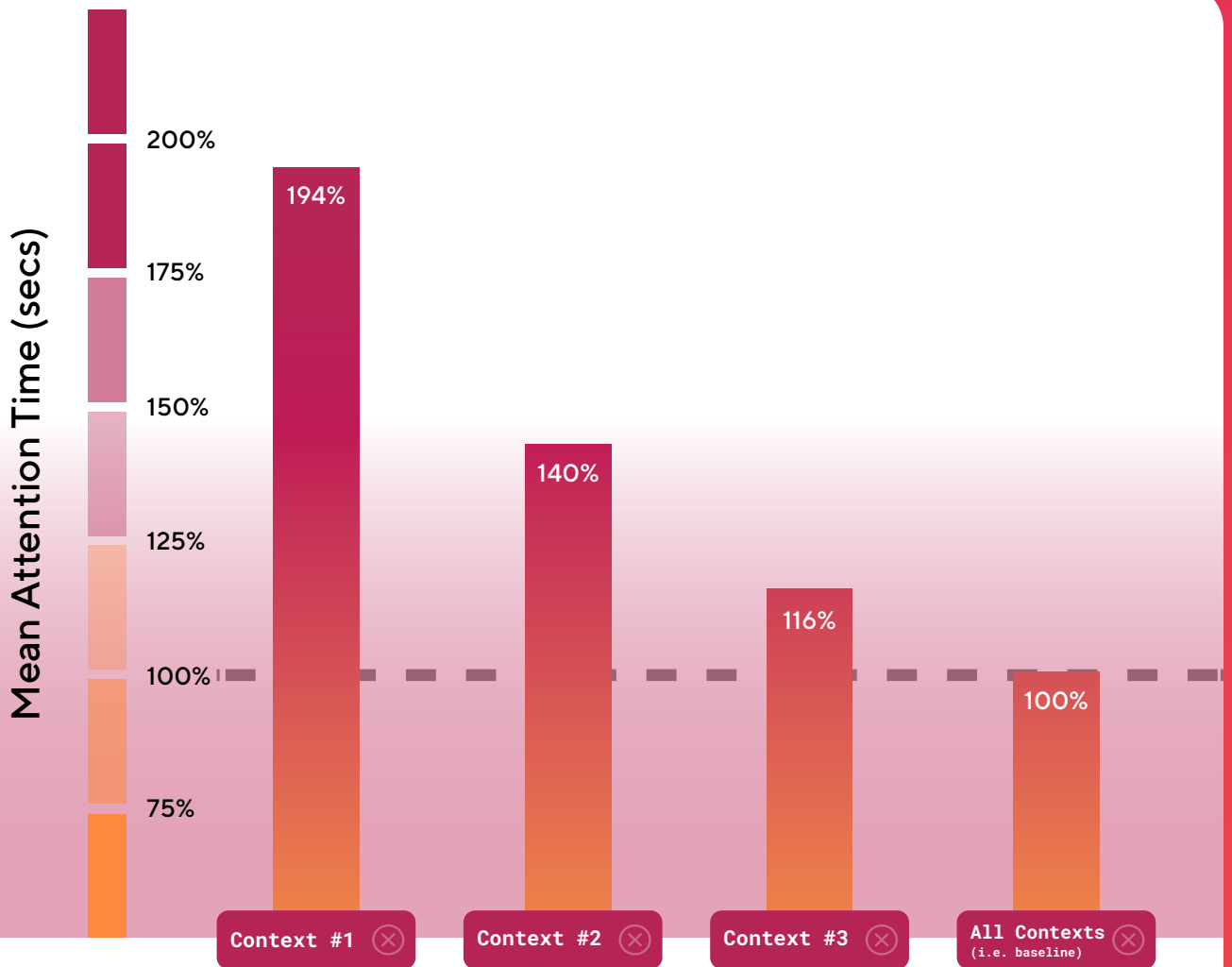
Part 2: The relationship between context, creative and attention

In our study we learnt that if we measure many different creatives on the same piece of content and control for all other factors like placement, device etc., we are able to see that the Attention Time varies wildly. This was proof that there was a relationship between the creative, the context and the attention it receives.
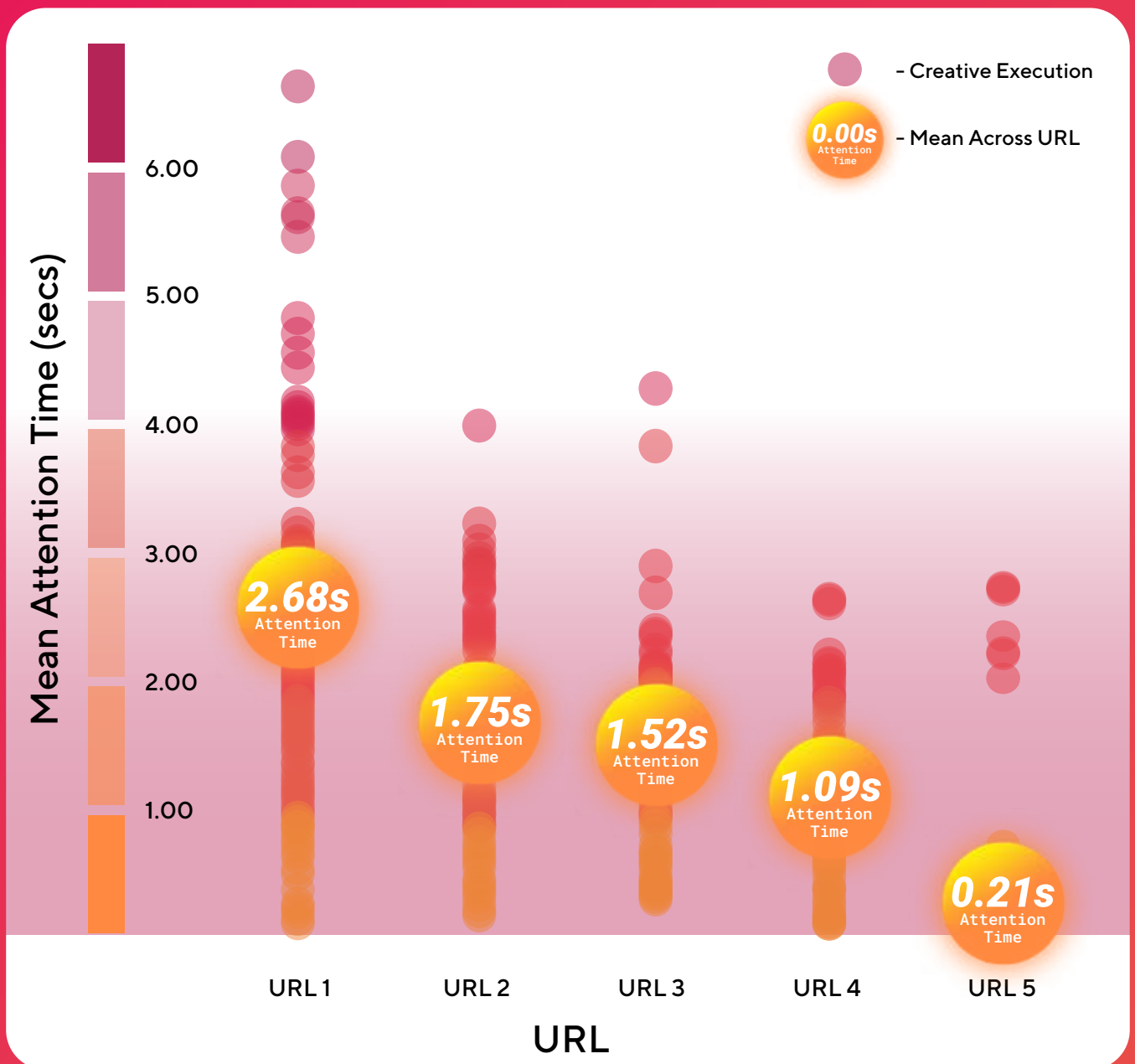
Mean Attention Time across sample URLs

If we rank the contexts by the attention they receive (i.e. Context #1 = The highest performing context, Context #2 = the second highest performing context, Context #3 = the third highest) we can see just how powerful it is for a brand to land in the right contexts.

Mean Attention Time (secs)

200%	
194%	Context #1 ⊗
175%	
150%	
140%	Context #2 ⊗
125%	
116%	Context #3 ⊗
100%	All Contexts (i.e. baseline) ⊗
100%	
75%	

💡 **The top performing context for a creative receives 94% more Attention Time than the baseline.**

Mean Attention Time Index for Top Performing Contexts vs a Baseline

Part 3: The dynamic nature of context

But does this stay the same? Can brands target the same contexts over and over? It turns out it's more nuanced than that.

To answer this, we studied the advertisers and campaigns in our dataset, and determined the number of times the top performing contexts for one ad creative correlated with that of another. We call this **contextual continuity**.

A high degree of crossover would indicate strong contextual continuity, where brands could confidently expect their ads to secure similar Attention Time across the same contexts, no matter the creative execution. A low proportion would indicate the opposite.

CONTEXT RANKING	Majority of creatives (>50%)	Most creatives (>75%)	All creatives (>100%)
Any of the **top 3** contexts	81%	37%	15%
Top context only	30%	14%	8%

The likelihood of the top contexts (IAB Tier 1) being the same across a brand's different creative executions

> **70% of the time a brand cannot expect the same contextual category to deliver the highest Attention Time for the majority of their creatives.**

Just 8% of the time will a brand have the same top performing contextual category across all creatives.

Because we know that Context #1 will deliver far more Attention Time than Context #2 and #3 this presents a challenge and an opportunity for brands who want to maximise attention.

Are these results surprising? Perhaps at first, but we believe they highlight how nuanced and multidimensional the quest for context-advertisement alignment really is. It's clear that for maximum results contextual targeting should be considered at an individual creative level.
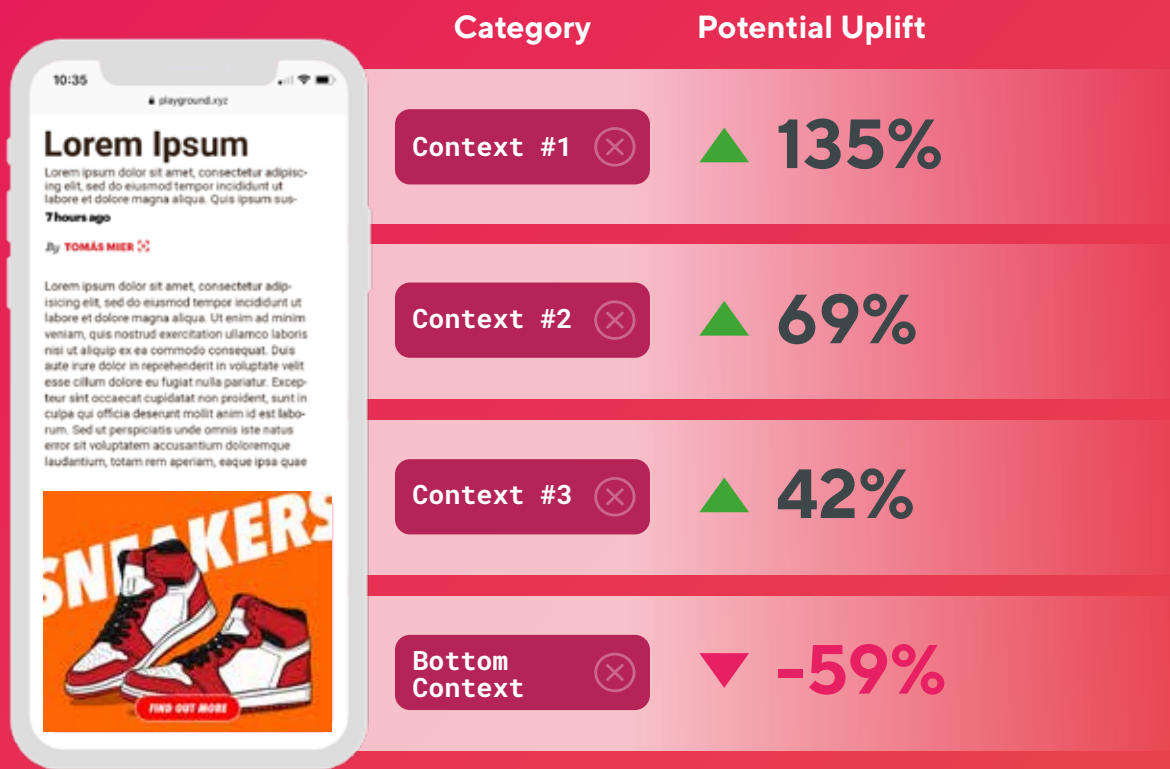
Part 4: Optimising contextual delivery to maximise Attention Time

So, how can brands act on this information to achieve better results?

We next estimate the lift in Attention Time a given brand could receive if it used data from the first half of the campaign to to only target its top-performing categories during the second half. We also assessed what happened if that targeting got more granular.

	Category	Potential Uplift
	Context #1 ⊗	▲ 135%
	Context #2 ⊗	▲ 69%
	Context #3 ⊗	▲ 42%
	Bottom Context ⊗	▼ -59%

Mean increase in Attention Time when optimising to top contexts. Using the IAB Tier 2 categories.

Targeting the top performing category would drive a 135% lift in Attention Time

As we can see, there are some very large gains possible if brands can reach the top performing contexts, with high levels of potential wastage if categories achieving poor levels of attention continue to be served to.

Takeaways

While there's certainly lots more to learn, we think this deep dive into context, creative and attention yielded a number of key findings that benefit brands, agencies and publishers alike:

Attention Time is a potent signal of ad relevance and predictive of brand and performance outcomes, making it a powerful feedback loop for contextual advertising.

1

Recommend action:
Incorporate real-time attention measurement into your digital advertising.

2

There is a strong relationship between context, creative and attention. Delivering your ad into the right contexts is key to maximising Attention Time and boosting KPIs.

Recommend action:
Speak to your agency or planning team now about incorporating attention measurement and optimisation into your contextual strategy. Attention isn't a replacement for contextual, it's a potent performance-enhancer.

Takeaways

3

There is a fairly low degree of contextual continuity for brands across different creatives. Finding the best context(s) once and repeating over and over will not give the brand the best outcomes – the relationship between context and creative is nuanced and dynamic.

Recommend action:
Review your contextual advertising strategy and try to determine if you are assuming an existence of contextual continuity. Do you serve all ad creatives across similar or the same contexts and expect the same results?

4

There is a large opportunity for in-flight optimisation to the top performing contexts which could drive very significant increases in Attention Time for the campaign.
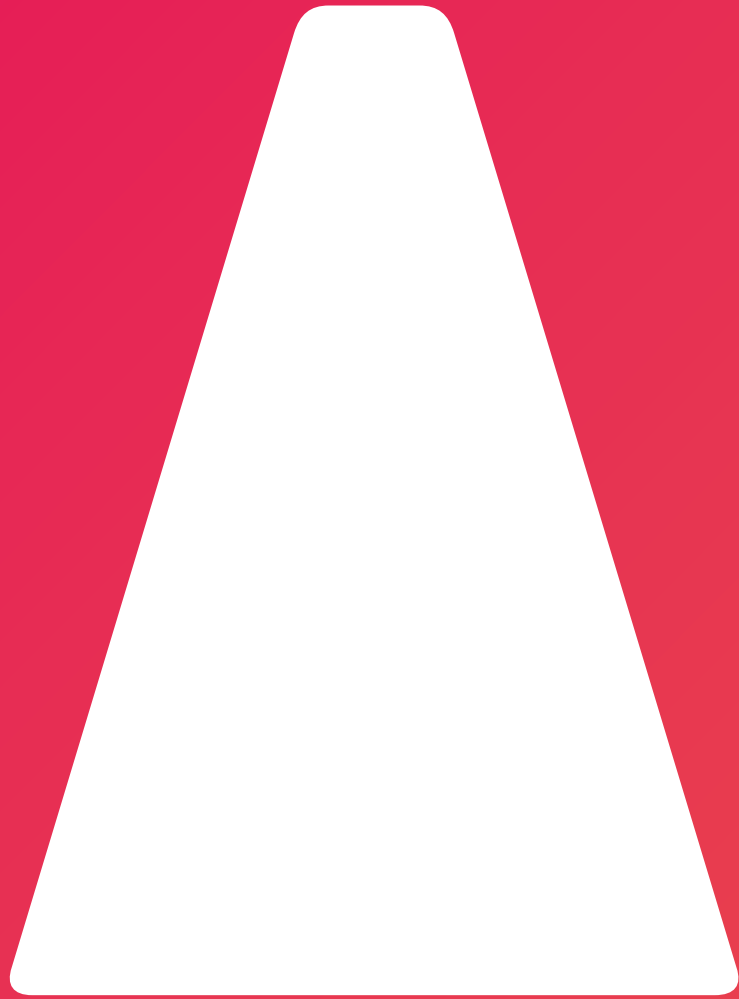
Recommend action:
Incorporate an attention optimisation solution into your campaign management. The best attention solutions are already built into the programmatic ecosystem and available for advertisers to begin testing and benefiting from right now.

We hope this study was useful and that these insights lead to more discussion and research around this fascinating topic. Thank you for taking the time to read it.

The Playground xyz team

Contact Us

For more information on why and how you should incorporate attention into your contextual strategy, contact your Playground xyz account manager or get in touch at **info@playgroundxyz.com**