

# UKOM Opinion

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## Are data and digital ad-technology solving or driving marketing's challenges (or simply adding to them?)

### Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

The epigram by Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr written in the January 1849 issue of his journal "Les Guepes" or "The Wasps" (no, me neither) and translating as "the more things change, the more they stay the same" - apologies, of course, you knew that already - may seem wholly out of place in a world where disruption and upside-down-world-turning change is a constant. There are however signs that even now, such apparently out of date truisms can still hold weight.

If you spend any time among the businesses working in or around digital media and marketing you will not be a stranger to the feeling that we should all be terrified of (and of course excited by) the pace and scale of change and the disruption around us. If you're not confused, befuddled and quaking as you wonder how you will cope with the upheaval then you MUST be way behind the curve, and probably about to fall off it, or blissfully ignorant and missing something seismic and brand new that will inevitably crush you.

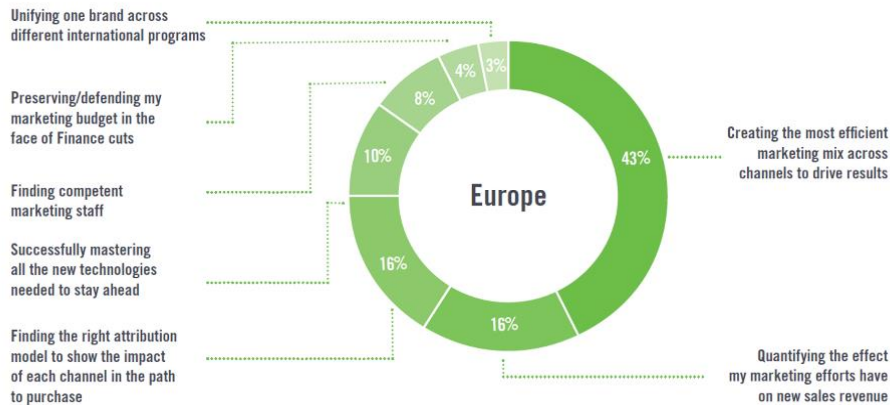
Of course technological development is accelerating and of course with such development the opportunities and inherent challenges of reaching and engaging with fragmented, time-poor, multi-platform, distracted audiences are multiplying. Nobody would deny that it's an increasingly complex world indeed.

However, it does not follow that the challenges of media and marketing in this age are exclusively digital ones, nor that the knotty problems faced by the marketing and advertising industry are only recently amplified by digital and technological capabilities.

At the hugely insightful IAB Research Breakfast recently, among the three presentations was an engaging and enlightening piece of research from DataXu entitled "How is technology shaping tomorrow's marketer?"

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## Number One Challenge for Marketers Is Measuring Marketing ROI Across Channels



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While presented at an IAB event, with its implicit digital focus, what struck me most was that 86% of the 500+ senior marketers across Europe seemed to identify primary challenges that are, and have been, broadly applicable across all media, digital and analogue, new and old, and in all probability won't differ all that much from the challenges that their predecessors of ten, twenty or possibly fifty years ago also struggled with.

What is the optimal channel mix? Can I trust any attribution modelling? Finding competent staff. Defending marketing spend to the CFO. Unifying a brand across borders. As challenges go, this list doesn't scream internet, digital or mobile.

Of course, there were the 14% who acknowledged understanding all the new and presumably digital platforms as their biggest head-scratcher. But the rest?

Creating the most efficient channel mix? Quantifying the effects marketing efforts have and finding the right attribution model? Sounds familiar. "Half of my advertising works..." you know the rest, you know who and you know when he said it.

Finding the right staff? Proof was unearthed in 2010 that even the Pharaohs knew you had to get the right people – it wasn't slaves but skilled and motivated workers that had to build the pyramids at Giza c.2500 B.C.

Fighting against finance budget cuts? Oh come on, that's what finance do and always have done. Cut budgets (and not just marketing ones). We know that.

Making sense cross-border and cross-cultures? Where do I start?! Wherever it is, you can be sure I won't finish anytime soon.

In his recent Mediatel piece the IAB's Tim Elkington made a strong defence of digital. What stood out for me from that piece wasn't the "give digital a break" headline, but more the "we're all in this together" observation. If ever there was evidence to back that up it is the DataXu research. The vast majority of what is causing advertisers to scratch their heads is not unique to digital, social, search, mobile, tablet data or programmatic. It is not the three letter acronym mania of data management

platforms, supply-side or demand-side platforms, private marketplaces or click through rates. Viewability, ad-fraud and ad-blocking are all part of the “how do I quantify the effect of my marketing efforts?” conundrum. They are in there but alongside linear TV and VOD, digital and traditional outdoor, print, radio, cinema and below-the-line and much much more.

Digital media can rightly claim enormous influence over so much of what happens in today’s world but it can’t hog all the glory and it certainly doesn’t hog all the challenges.

Plus ca change indeed.