# Unified Media Planning Playbook

## ACROSS CTV, OLV, SOCIAL VIDEO, AND FAST

**JULY 2025**

## Executive Summary

In today's fragmented video landscape, advertisers face increasing complexity in planning, executing, and measuring campaigns across Connected TV (CTV), Online Video (OLV), Social Video, and Free Ad-Supported Streaming TV (FAST). Each channel operates with distinct identity frameworks, data silos, buying mechanisms, and performance metrics. Unified media planning, the ability to deliver seamless, coordinated campaigns across platforms, remains an aspirational goal due to persistent fragmentation, privacy challenges, and lack of standardization. Unified media planning is not about achieving seamless perfection, it's about embracing the mess with smart, flexible tools and cross-functional collaboration. The industry is moving from aspirational unification to practical integration. The most successful marketers will be those who accept fragmentation, build modular solutions, and work toward interoperability, one stitch at a time.

This playbook doesn't present a single, unified solution, because one doesn't exist. Instead, it offers a pragmatic framework to navigate the fractured video ecosystem through layered tools and workarounds that stitch coherence into chaos. The need for these patchwork strategies underscores a hard truth: the industry remains misaligned, and significant work is still required to achieve true interoperability and standardization.

## Key Challenges

- **Fragmentation & Identity Disparities:** Each channel uses unique identifiers (e.g., IPs for CTV, cookies for OLV, user IDs for Social), making cross-channel targeting, measurement, and frequency control difficult.
- **Measurement Inconsistencies:** Metrics such as "views" or "completion rates" vary widely across platforms, creating apples-to-oranges comparisons.
- **Data Silos:** Platforms restrict data sharing, limiting unified planning and attribution.
- **Privacy & Signal Loss:** Regulatory changes and platform policies have reduced tracking capabilities (e.g., cookies, IDFAs), complicating identity resolution and ROI measurement.

## 5 Key Takeaways For The Buy-Side

### 1. Embrace a Patchwork Approach: There Is No One-Size-Fits-All Solution

Unified media planning is inherently fragmented. Brands and agencies must build layered, interoperable solutions—combining clean rooms, Customer Data Platforms (CDPs), shared audience frameworks, and hybrid measurement strategies—to gain a cohesive view of audiences and performance.

### 2. Prioritize Cross-Platform Identity and Measurement Strategy

Without consistent identity resolution, duplicated reach and suboptimal frequency are inevitable. Invest in tools like RampID, UID2.0 or Fabrick ID, Graph-based Identity Frameworks and Identity Management tools such as the ones by Oracle, Experian and Axiom, clean room collaborations, and standardized KPIs to bridge data interoperability and enable more accurate attribution and optimization.

**3. Choose Tech Partners and DSPs Strategically**

Omnichannel DSPs and unified measurement platforms are essential. Favor partners that offer cross-channel forecasting, identity integration, and premium inventory access. Avoid over-reliance on any single platform just for ease of execution.

**4. Standardize Internally Where the Industry Hasn't**

Create internal benchmarks for KPIs (e.g., cost per completed view, viewable impressions) and normalize creative specs and audience definitions across teams. Internal consistency is critical to compare performance and allocate budgets intelligently.

**5. Prepare for a Privacy-First Future Now**

Signal loss is only accelerating. Build resilience by collecting and activating first-party data, using contextual targeting where identity is thin, and adopting outcome-based buying models. Waiting for a universal solution will leave you behind.

## 5 Key Takeaways For The Sell-Side

**1. Interoperability Is a Competitive Advantage**

Buyers are frustrated by data silos and platform fragmentation. Publishers and platforms that offer open APIs, clean room integrations, and support for universal IDs (like RampID, UID2.0 or Fabrick ID) will be more attractive to brands seeking scalable, cross-channel solutions.

**2. Standardization Fuels Growth**

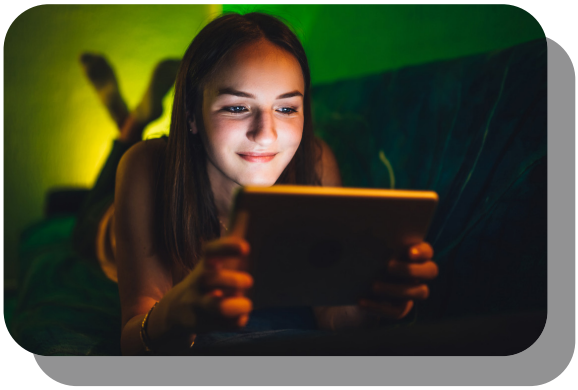
Aligning on shared audience taxonomies, consistent KPIs (e.g., viewability, completion rate), and measurement standards (e.g., IAB's Open Measurement SDK) makes it easier for buyers to include your inventory in unified media plans and cross-platform reporting.

**3. Transparency Drives Trust**

Opaque data policies limit inclusion in sophisticated attribution models. Sellers that share exposure-level data in privacy-compliant environments and support third-party measurement will gain a larger share of performance-driven budgets.

**4. Contextual and Outcome-Based Solutions Are Rising in Value**

As signal loss and privacy regulations grow, advertisers are turning to contextual targeting and outcome-based buying. Platforms that can offer scalable, context-rich environments or transact on outcomes (e.g., completed views, conversions) will be better positioned for the future.



**5. Collaboration Beats Control**

Sellers that work with brands, agencies, and measurement partners to pilot new planning, targeting, and attribution models will be best positioned to shape future standards, differentiate their offerings, and capture a greater share of advertiser investment in an increasingly fragmented media landscape.

# Chapter 1: Fragmentation & Lack of Standardization

Unified media planning today begins with a fractured landscape. Each video channel, CTV, OLV, Social, and FAST, exists in its own ecosystem, defined by distinct buying mechanisms, targeting capabilities, and identity frameworks. Advertisers looking to execute cross-platform campaigns must juggle multiple insertion orders, dashboards, DSPs, and data sets. A campaign might span Roku, YouTube, TikTok, and Samsung, but each platform speaks its own language and guards its data accordingly.

Targeting strategies vary widely. CTV leans on household-level IP data and device graphs. OLV depends on a blend of cookies, device IDs, and first-party data. Social platforms boast the richest identity graphs, yet restrict access to them, limiting cross-platform visibility. FAST often offers the least in terms of targeting and transparency, relying more on contextual signals and opaque OEM pipelines.

The result is a stitched-together campaign where audience overlap is hard to see, reach is often duplicated, and frequency is difficult to control. In short, a patchwork problem.

To counter this, marketers have built a patchwork solution: a tech stack designed to unify fragmented data and coordinate planning. CDPs, DMPs, data clean rooms, and analytics platforms are used to normalize inputs and attempt a unified view of the customer journey. Consistent UTM tagging, cross-device tracking, and shared audience frameworks have become the tools of the trade.

Yet these solutions bring their own complications. Closed ecosystems restrict external data interoperability. Identity resolution is increasingly limited by privacy rules and signal loss. Interoperability remains challenging, and real-time optimization is hindered by data latency and platform constraints. This is not a perfect system, it's a workaround, born of necessity.

## Key Challenges

### Disparate Inventory Access & Buying Mechanisms

Each channel often operates in its own ecosystem, with limited cross-platform interoperability where CTV and FAST inventory may be fragmented across OEMs (i.e., Roku, Samsung, LG) and publishers (i.e., Disney, Netflix, Tubi). OLV and Social Video often rely on platform-specific ad managers (i.e., Google Ads for YouTube, Meta Ads for Facebook/Instagram). This requires multiple insertion orders, dashboards, and DSPs, complicating inventory discovery and central planning.

Fragmentation hinders unified media planning by siloing data, disrupting audience visibility, and making cross-platform coordination difficult.

### Nuances By Channel

- CTV typically uses device-level data (IP address, household data) for targeting. Data providers vary, and household-level IDs are not always consistent.
- OLV uses a mix of cookie-based, device ID, and first-party audience targeting. Less consistent cross-device linking.
- Social Video largely uses user-identity combined with deep interest graphs (i.e., TikTok, Meta). These are not typically interoperable with other video types for shared audience definitions.
- FAST has limited targeting and often relies on contextual or household-level targeting. Identity resolution varies by platform and is rarely transparent.

## Why It Matters

This lack of interoperability, identity resolution, and consistent audience taxonomy across platforms leads to duplicated reach, wasted impressions, and limited frequency control, ultimately degrading media efficiency and campaign performance.

## Potential Solutions

To address these challenges, unified video planning has become both more complex and more essential. It now requires a multi-channel mindset, sophisticated data analytics, and personalized, platform-specific strategies. Fragmentation hinders this process by siloing data, disrupting audience visibility, and making cross-platform coordination difficult. Without standardization, planners must design intricate, bespoke strategies for each platform, slowing down activation and optimization. The solutions lie in industry-wide efforts to unify data, measurement, and audience definitions.

These tools aim to give planners a single, integrated view of the audience journey, helping them identify where consumers are, how they behave, and what content resonates. While each of the following has a specific function, their shared purpose is to: ingest data from disparate systems, clean, standardize, and reconcile the data and enable cross-platform analysis, targeting, and optimization.

- **Tech Stack Solutions:** Customer Data Platforms (CDPs) , Data Management Platforms (DMPs), Data Lakes & Warehouses, Data Clean Rooms, Unified Measurement and Analytics Platforms
- **Consistent Urchin Tracking Modules (UTM) Tagging**
- **Cross-device Tracking**
- **Shared Audience Frameworks**

### Tech Stack Benefits

- **Data Unification:** Consolidating fragmented data across channels, formats, and platforms into a cohesive view. Enables holistic planning, measurement, and frequency control.
- **Cross-Platform Audience Resolution:** Connecting user behaviors and exposures across devices and environments. Supports accurate reach/frequency calculation, sequential messaging, and audience targeting across video types.
- **Enhanced Targeting & Segmentation:** Creating detailed audience profiles using first-, second-, and third-party data. Improves media efficiency and relevance across diverse video surfaces (i.e., targeting intent-rich segments across FAST and YouTube).
- **Unified Measurement & Attribution:** Normalizing metrics and performance data to allow direct comparisons and outcome analysis. Helps you understand true campaign impact across platforms, guiding smarter budget allocation.

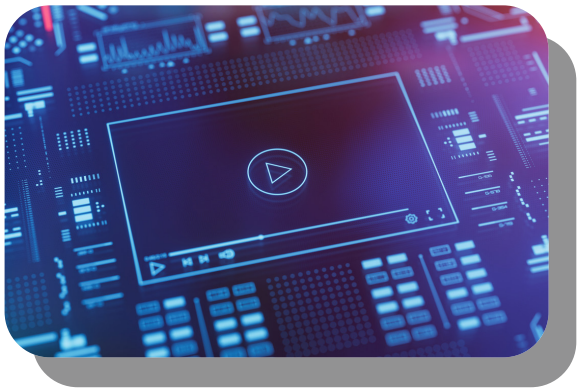
### Tech Stack Limitations

- **Data Fragmentation Still Persists:** Consolidating Even with unification tools, many platforms (i.e., Meta, YouTube, Roku) remain closed off from broader ecosystem integration.
- True deduplication, unified reach/frequency, or holistic attribution is still incomplete.
- **Identity Resolution Gaps:** Cross-device, cross-platform identity is becoming harder due to signal loss (i.e., loss of

cookies, IDFA, MAIDs). Limits targeting, measurement, and audience continuity, especially across CTV and Social Video.

- **Data Interoperability Challenges:** Differing data formats, taxonomies, and schemas across platforms and vendors. Requires manual mapping, ETL processes, or middleware to align disparate datasets - slowing real-time insights.
- **Latency and Data Freshness Issues:** Some platforms update data in batches (daily/weekly), and data ingestion pipelines can introduce delays. Limits ability to optimize in real time across fast-moving media channels (i.e., TikTok, YouTube Shorts).
- **High Costs and Complexity:** Licensing, implementation, engineering, and ongoing maintenance across multiple systems is expensive. Often restricts access to larger advertisers or forces trade-offs in stack architecture.
- **Steep Learning Curve and Talent Gaps:** Advanced tools (i.e., data clean rooms, data lakes) require data science, cloud engineering, and governance expertise. Creates reliance on external partners or agencies, and slows time to value.
- **Measurement Standardization: Still Lags:** KPIs like "viewability," "attention," "completion rate," or "reach" aren't uniformly defined across CTV, OLV, and Social. Even with unified measurement tools, direct comparison remains difficult or approximate.

## Consistent UTM Tagging



Consistent UTM tagging refers to the standardized use of UTM parameters (Urchin Tracking Module codes) across all marketing URLs to track user engagement and attribution across channels, platforms, and campaigns. UTM tagging helps unify data collection and makes it possible to track how and where audiences are engaging with video content, even as they move across platforms and devices.

UTM tagging presents several limitations in the context of unified media planning. Many video environments, especially CTV, FAST apps, and in-app mobile video, don't use clickable URLs or traditional browsers, rendering UTM tags invisible or inapplicable. This creates significant blind spots in attribution and campaign analysis. Additionally, UTMs don't support cross-device tracking, offline conversions, or multi-touch attribution. Also as privacy restrictions grow, reliance on UTMs alone becomes increasingly insufficient, pushing marketers toward more robust, identity-based or platform-native measurement frameworks for unified media planning.

## Cross-device Tracking

Cross-device tracking is the process of recognizing that multiple device interactions belong to a single consumer, enabling marketers to de-duplicate audiences, manage frequency, attribute conversions and build more holistic user journeys. They do this through two types of tracking; Deterministic tracking and Probabilistic tracking.

- **Deterministic** is usually based on logged-in user IDs (i.e., Google, Meta, Amazon, Roku) which uses persistent identity graphs across devices. Common in closed ecosystems and authenticated environments.
- **Probabilistic** usually uses device signals, IP addresses, location, time of day, browser type, etc., to infer identity and are more common in open web and non-logged-in environments.
- Both are increasingly subject to privacy regulations and platform restrictions.

## Shared Audience Frameworks

Shared audience frameworks are standardized methods or systems for defining and measuring audiences consistently across media channels, platforms, and publishers. They help ensure that everyone is working from the same definitions when targeting and analyzing audience behavior.

At their core, a shared audience frameworks provide:

- Common definitions of audience segments (i.e., “Moms with young children,” “Auto intenders,” “Gen Z sports fans”)
- Standardized attributes or taxonomies (i.e., age, household income, interests, purchase behaviors)
- Interoperable identifiers such as hashed emails, MAIDs, IPs, or clean room-based IDs
- Cross-platform compatibility

Shared audience frameworks, where publishers, platforms, and advertisers agree on a common method of audience definition, segmentation, and activation. These frameworks enable more consistent audience targeting across channels, reducing duplication and ensuring that media plans are anchored in a common taxonomy. When platforms align on audience constructs, such as age, interest, behavioral traits, or intent, advertisers can more confidently activate a segment (i.e., "auto intenders" or "millennial parents"). This not only improves audience coherence and media efficiency, but also simplifies campaign setup, facilitates cross-platform measurement, and streamlines post-campaign analytics.

However, shared audience frameworks face limitations and barriers to adoption. First, platform silos and competitive interests make broad standardization difficult, major platforms often operate with proprietary audience definitions and restricted interoperability. Second, shared audiences often rely on third-party data or modeling assumptions, which can introduce inconsistencies in scale, quality, or freshness across platforms. Lastly, growing regulatory and privacy constraints limit how audience data can be matched and shared, particularly without explicit user consent. As a result, while shared audience frameworks are a promising step toward more unified planning, they remain a partial solution that must be supplemented with identity solutions, clean rooms, and advanced analytics to enable true cross-platform precision.

## Examples

- **IAB Tech Lab's Audience Taxonomy:** A widely adopted standardized audience classification system.
- **LiveRamp’s RampID:** An identity spine that powers cross-channel targeting and measurement.
- **The Trade Desk’s Unified ID 2.0 (UID2**): Open-source identity framework for cookieless audience targeting.
- **Nielsen One / VideoAmp / Comscore:** Cross-platform measurement systems that rely on shared audience structures.
- **Fabrick ID:** Provides an alternative way to identify users for targeted advertising and measurement by moving beyond traditional cookies.
- **Graph-based Identity Frameworks:** Allows platforms to resolve different identifiers into a unified profile or entity, which may be a user, household, or device cluster .

## Agency Proprietary Systems

Each major agency group has developed its own set of proprietary systems or preferred systems and platforms to support unified media planning. These systems are often a combination of in-house tech, strategic partnerships and third-party tools customized to their workflow. These systems are constantly being updated and modified to offer the most up-to-date and highest quality system possible.

Partnerships can include integrations with: The Trade Desk, Adobe, LiveRamp, Google/ YouTube, Meta, Amazon, and others.

They have the **benefits** of:

- Integrating data, planning, investment and analytics into a single environment
- Creating cross-device ID graphs with deep consumer profiles
- Unifying reach & frequency management

However there are **limitations**:

- Identity graphs vary in quality; cookieless and CTV environments degrade match rates and targeting precision.
- Still no universal standard for viewability, attention, or ROI across video platforms.
- Real-time optimization is difficult; platform data often lags behind campaign needs.
- Even with unified planning platforms, activation often happens with separate partners.

These proprietary systems aid in every step of the media planning process including measurement & attribution, budget allocation & optimization and privacy & transparency.

# Chapter 2: Measurement & Attribution

Just as planning is fragmented, so is measurement. A "view" means something different on every platform. YouTube, Hulu, and TikTok all count impressions, but the definitions vary—by time spent, whether the sound is on, and whether the screen is in view. Completion rates and engagement can be calculated differently. Without a universal measurement currency or agreed-upon KPIs, marketers are left comparing apples to oranges.

Identity fragmentation compounds the issue. OLV and social platforms use identity-based tracking, but CTV and FAST are anchored in IP-based or household-level data. Linking user behavior across platforms is difficult, and in some cases impossible. Siloed data environments prevent true multi-touch attribution or cross-platform incrementality measurement.

Marketers are left asking the same question: Did the Instagram Story close the sale, or was it the Hulu spot seen the night before?

In response, the industry has pieced together a hybrid model. Unified identity solutions like Unified ID 2.0 and RampID attempt to link users across devices. Clean rooms offer privacy-compliant data collaboration between brands and platforms. Standardized APIs and measurement SDKs aim to normalize KPIs. Lift tests, A/B experiments, and MMM offer ways to estimate impact where precision fails.

But again, these are patchwork fixes. Clean rooms are siloed and complex. Identity graphs are incomplete and subject to regulatory limitations. Standardized metrics are not universally adopted. Still, in the absence of a single solution, the only option is to layer partial solutions—testing, modeling, and approximating.

## Key Challenges

### Inconsistent Metrics and KPIs

Each platform and channel often uses different metrics to define impressions, viewability, completion rates, reach, engagement, and conversions. This inconsistency makes it difficult to compare performance or aggregate data across platforms meaningfully. For example, A "view" on YouTube may be different from a "view" on Hulu or TikTok in terms of time watched, whether audio was on, or if the screen was in view. See IAB's Anatomy of a Video Impression here.

### Fragmented Identity and Cross-Device Challenges

Each environment often uses different IDs (i.e., cookies, MAIDs, IP addresses, logged-in user IDs). This fragmentation hinders the ability to track users across devices and platforms for unified attribution or personalization.

- **Social** and **OLV** (like Facebook or TikTok) use identity-based identifiers.
- **CTV** and **FAST** rely more on IP or household-level identifiers.

## Nuances

### Siloed Data and Closed Ecosystems

Closed ecosystems limit third-party measurement and prohibit data sharing. This leads to black boxes where advertisers can't access impression-level or user-level data to perform independent analysis. Limited transparency and inability to do true multi-touch attribution or cross-platform incrementality testing.

### Lack of Agreed-Upon Currency or Panels

There's no universal measurement currency or trusted panel that spans all environments. Some rely on panel-based data (i.e., Nielsen for TV), others on platform-reported metrics, and still others on modeled or probabilistic data; therefore, brands can't make apples-to-apples comparisons across video types.

## Why it Matters

### Duplication and Inaccurate Reach/Frequency

Without standardized identity resolution, the same user may be counted multiple times across platforms. This leads to inflated reach numbers and suboptimal frequency management, which reduces campaign efficiency. Overexposure to some users and underexposure to others, wasting ad spend and decreasing effectiveness.

### Difficulty in Multi-Touch Attribution (MTA)

Without consistent tracking and identifiers, attributing conversions to the correct touchpoint across the fragmented video ecosystem becomes unreliable. You wouldn't know whether a user converted after watching an ad on CTV or after seeing it again on Instagram Stories.

### Challenges in ROI and Incrementality Measurement

Due to the above issues, determining the incremental lift or true ROI of a campaign becomes murky, leading to misinformed budget allocation. As an example, it is difficult to tell if a spike in conversions was due to CTV exposure or a retargeting video ad on Instagram.

### Increased Complexity and Cost

Marketers must stitch together data from multiple DSPs, SSPs, attribution vendors, and walled gardens, often requiring manual work, additional tech, or consultancies. This can cause delayed insights, added cost, and errors in data stitching.

## Potential Solutions to the Challenges

To overcome the issues, the industry is pursuing several technical, operational, and collaborative solutions. No single solution fully solves the problem. The most effective strategy today is a hybrid approach, combining identity graphs, clean rooms, first-party data, experimentation, and MMM (Marketing Mix Modeling) in a layered framework, tailored to your media mix, data maturity, and regulatory environment. Unified Identity Solutions (Cross-Device & Cross-Platform ID Graphs) was detailed in Chapter 1 while Clean Rooms & Data Collaboration Environments are detailed in Chapter 4.

### Standardized Measurement APIs

Create consistent definitions and methodologies for key metrics like impressions, viewability, and conversions.

- IAB Tech Lab's Open Measurement SDK for mobile and video environments.
- CIMM's Cross-Media Measurement initiative (ACR / AD-ID).
- ANA's Aquila.
- Limitations: Inconsistent adoption, will need to be revisited over time.

### Incrementality Testing & Experiment-Based Attribution

Compensate for identity gaps and black-box data with lift testing.

- A/B or geo-based holdout tests from providers like Measured, Meta, Google, TVision, or Kochava.
- Propensity modeling or synthetic control groups where true holdouts aren't feasible.
- Limitations: Costly, slow, not scalable.

### Consolidated, Cross-Channel Verification Platforms

Provide a single view across CTV, OLV, social, and other media types.

- DoubleVerify, Integral Ad Science (IAS), Comscore, iSpot.tv, VideoAmp, TVSquared (by Innovid).
- Unified dashboards through MTA vendors, CDPs, or MMM providers (i.e., TransUnion, Analytic Partners).
- Limitations: Data gaps, integration complexity, high cost.

### Publisher and Platform Collaboration

Encourage open integrations, API access, and alignment on measurement standards.

- This would improve data availability and compatibility and provide a more complete and consistent measurement across supply.
- Limitations: Not universal, proprietary, limited transparency.

### First-Party Data Strategy & Consent-Based Targeting

Build sustainable data strategies in a privacy-focused world.

- Enhanced CRM onboarding to media platforms.
- Consent-based data collection via logins and opt-ins.
- Contextual video targeting where identity is limited.
- Limitations: Scale & match-rate challenges, operational overhead.

### Example

Hypothetically, a national outdoor retailer launched a $5 million cross-channel video campaign across CTV, OLV, and social platforms to drive sales, but quickly ran into the challenge of fragmented measurement and attribution. Each platform used different definitions for views and completion rates, making performance comparisons nearly impossible. Identity fragmentation compounded the issue, with household-level tracking on CTV and user-level tracking on social, leaving the team unsure which touchpoint, like a Hulu ad or an Instagram Story, actually drove conversions.

To solve this, the retailer deployed a hybrid measurement strategy. They used datab clean rooms (Google ADH, LiveRamp) to match CRM data with impressions, cross-device ID graphs (RampID) to stitch together user journeys, and geo-based lift tests to isolate the impact of CTV. A unified MMM dashboard helped them view modeled ROI across channels. While the approach wasn't perfect, it was complex, slow, and with data gaps, it enabled better decision-making, proving that layering solutions was the only viable path in today's fragmented video landscape.

## Chapter 3: Budget Allocation

Allocating spend across fragmented video channels has become an exercise in customized approaches. With inconsistent metrics and no unified planning platform, budget optimization is often reactive and manual.

Some platforms are developing AI-powered models to predict performance across channels, but predictive planning is still in its infancy. For now, the best approach is to choose tech partners carefully—omnichannel DSPs with transparency, unified KPIs, and inventory clarity. Standardizing internal benchmarks (like cost per completed view or viewable impression) is critical. So is pre-vetting social and OLV inventory for brand safety and alignment.

Education is key. Teams must understand the nuances of each environment. Whether you're planning in TikTok or Samsung TV Plus, the context matters—and the metrics differ. Collaboration with publishers and platforms can help, especially when co-developing audience targeting or measurement pilots. But again, success depends on stitching together partial insights into a whole picture.

### Key Challenges

#### Difficulties in Budget Allocation and Optimization

Without standardization, planners struggle to allocate budget efficiently across channels because they can't easily predict performance or value. Optimization becomes manual and reactive rather than data-driven and predictive although companies are working on predictive AI models to solve this issue.

### Nuances

Budget allocation and optimization involves balancing diverse pricing models, audience behaviors, measurement standards, and technological interoperability. It's hard to change budget allocation between channels mid-flight because of a combination of technical limitations, operational friction, and organizational silos.

#### Platform and Ecosystem Fragmentation

Each channel runs in its own silo, CTV on one DSP or direct-to-publisher, Social within walled gardens (i.e., Meta, TikTok), OLV through multiple SSPs, FAST via proprietary platforms (i.e., Pluto, Tubi). No shared dashboard or control plane to easily move dollars from one to another. For example, you can't just "move $100K from YouTube to Hulu" with a click, it involves pausing, rebooking, or reauthorizing with different vendors, metrics, and insertion orders.

#### Creative and Format Incompatibility

Creative specs differ widely across channels: CTV and FAST: 15–30s unskippable, often linear in tone. Social: Short, vertical, user-generated style. OLV: Mixed in-stream/outstream, often skippable. Reallocating budget often means creating or reformatting creative assets, which can take time and budget.

### Measurement and Attribution Inconsistencies

Each channel has its own metrics, attribution windows, and KPIs. Real-time performance comparisons are hard or impossible without advanced modeling or third-party tools. For example, social reports on engagement and conversions; CTV may report only on reach and completion—making optimization apples-to-oranges.et.

### Manual IOs and Contracting Structures

Many media buys, especially in CTV and FAST, are still managed through insertion orders (IOs) and purchased in advance. Shifting budgets mid-flight often requires renegotiation, contract changes, or delays in publisher approval.

### Pacing, Learning Curves, and Algorithmic Bias

Social and programmatic platforms use learning phases and bid optimization algorithms that rely on consistency. Sudden budget shifts can reset performance baselines, penalizing campaigns temporarily.

### Team and Org Structure Silos

Internal media teams are often divided by channel: Social, Programmatic, Linear/CTV. These teams may have separate budgets, KPIs, and agency partners, making mid-flight shifts a political or logistical challenge.

### Potential Solution

To enable real-time reallocation across video channels, organizations need Cross-channel measurement frameworks as detailed in previous chapters and data clean rooms which are detailed in Chapter 4.

- Unified buying platforms or omnichannel DSPs
- Flexible creative assets that work across formats
- Dynamic budget rules and automation (e.g., rules-based reallocation)
- Collaborative planning across teams, not just by channel

## Why it Matters

These nuances matter because they directly affect your ability to drive performance, scale, and ROI in a fragmented media environment. Unified media planning only works if planners and strategists understand the real differences between channels—financial, technical, and strategic.

**Budget Allocation Reflects Strategic Intent**

Allocating too much to one channel (i.e., CTV for reach) without accounting for its frequency caps or lack of interactivity can lead to diminishing returns. Smart budget allocation ensures the right mix of reach, frequency, engagement, and conversion.

**CPMs Affect Cost Efficiency and Planning Accuracy**

CPMs vary dramatically by channel, affecting how much actual audience you're buying per dollar. Understanding CPM differences helps balance quality vs. quantity and optimize for cost-effective outcomes.

**Optimization Levers Define How Agile You Can Be**

If a campaign underperforms on CTV, your ability to adjust quickly is limited. Social and OLV, however, let you pivot in real-time. Knowing which channels are more agile helps in building dynamic, responsive campaigns.

**Interoperability Determines Cross-Channel Synergy**

If platforms can't talk to each other (data, reporting, frequency), you risk wasting budget on duplication or losing sight of your audience journey. Understanding interoperability issues helps you invest in the right tech stack (e.g., data clean rooms, identity graphs) to manage campaigns holistically.

**Signal Loss Shapes the Future of Targeting and Measurement**

With cookies, mobile IDs, and IP addresses disappearing, some channels (CTV, Social) offer walled garden targeting while others become harder to measure. Marketers must adopt privacy-resilient solutions and model-based measurement, and select partners accordingly.

## Potential Solutions

### Leverage Advanced DSPs and Ad Tech

Choose omnichannel DSPs with direct integrations across the ecosystem (i.e., Yahoo, The Trade Desk, DV360). Prioritize DSPs with inventory transparency, cross-channel forecasting, and unified audience segments.

### Standardize KPIs and Benchmarks Internally

Define common KPIs across platforms (i.e., completed views, viewable impressions, cost per completed view). Normalize platform-specific metrics so all inventory is judged on comparable criteria.

### Prioritize Transparent, Premium Inventory

Choose partners that provide clear inventory transparency and access to premium content environments. Include private marketplaces (PMPs) or programmatic guaranteed (PG) deals for high-quality CTV and FAST placements.

### Invest in Education & Training

Ensure internal teams and agency partners understand the nuances of each video environment, from targeting to measurement. Stay up to date on industry standardization initiatives (i.e., Open Measurement SDK, VAST/VPAID standards). More on these in the previous chapters.

## Example

A typical scenario could be that a national quick-service restaurant (QSR) launched a multi-million dollar cross-channel video campaign to promote its summer menu but quickly ran into challenges allocating budget across platforms like Hulu, YouTube, TikTok, and Pluto TV. Each channel had different metrics, buying workflows, and creative requirements, making it nearly impossible to compare performance or reallocate spend efficiently. Closed ecosystems offered ease and speed, while premium CTV buys required insertion orders and manual rebooking. When the team tried to shift budget mid-flight, operational silos and incompatible KPIs made even simple reallocations slow and complex.

To overcome this, the QSR's agency centralized as much spend as possible through an omnichannel DSP (The Trade Desk, Yahoo DSP), implemented standardized KPIs like cost per completed view, and built modular creative assets that could flex across formats. Weekly cross-team meetings enabled agile decision-making, and rules-based automation allowed dynamic shifts in social and OLV budgets. By the end of the campaign, they had reallocated a significant portion of their original plan based on performance, leading to a lift in app conversions and significantly improved cost efficiency.

# Chapter 4: Privacy & Signal Loss

If fragmentation is the original sin of media planning, signal loss is the new fall. Privacy regulations and platform-driven changes have eroded traditional tracking methods. Cookies, IDFAs, MAIDs—once the backbone of digital advertising—are disappearing. What's left is a less precise picture of the audience.

CTV and FAST never relied on cookies, and now they lean on limited identifiers like IP addresses or app-level data—often controlled by OEMs and platforms with little incentive to share. OLV has taken a major hit from cookie deprecation, while social platforms remain rich in first-party data but unwilling to let it leave their gardens.

The outcome is predictable: wasted impressions, overexposed users, incomplete audience profiles, and unreliable attribution. Advertisers can't optimize creative delivery or truly measure ROI without exposure-level data linked to outcomes.

The solutions are familiar by now, identity frameworks, data clean rooms, first-party onboarding, contextual targeting. None are complete, and none work in isolation. But together, they form a functional patch: privacy-compliant, strategically layered, and increasingly reliant on collaboration and experimentation.

## Key Challenges

Privacy regulations (i.e., GDPR, CCPA, local state regulations) and platform-driven changes (i.e., Apple's ATT, Google's antitrust rulings) can reduce access to individual-level data across device IDs, IP addresses, cross-site tracking, and deterministic identity signals (login data). This signal loss makes it harder to create consistent audience segments across platforms, perform frequency management, conduct attribution and outcome-based measurement or optimize creative and media placement holistically.

## Nuances

CTV & FAST have limited third-party cookies; relies on IP, device graph, and app-level data. Fragmented identity resolution (Roku vs. Samsung vs. Amazon); inconsistent support for universal identifiers causing frequency management difficulty across apps and devices; measuring outcomes is often siloed or modeled. Household-level delivery often conflates identity (multiple users on one screen). FAST data access is often controlled by OEMs/platforms adding another layer of opacity.

OLV has historically been reliant on cookies and MAIDs (Mobile Advertising IDs). Cookie deprecation hit hardest here but seems to be ebbing with Google's recent about-face. Web environments vary greatly in their privacy policies and ID support.

Social Video has strong deterministic signals within each platform (logged-in users). Walled gardens limit cross-platform planning and measurement; data can't be exported for unification. Hard to measure deduplicated reach or outcomes across platforms. First-party data is strong within platforms but not interoperable.

## Why it Matters

- Fragmentation without coordination leads to wasted impressions, poor user experience, and inefficient reach/frequency.
- Advertisers can't reliably determine incrementality or deduplicated reach across platforms.
- Creative optimization suffers because exposure-level data is incomplete or unlinked to outcomes.
- ROI measurement and media mix modeling are compromised, as performance attribution becomes probabilistic.

## Potential Solutions

As mentioned in previous chapters unified data solutions, attribution models, targeting strategies and privacy-compliant measurement will help the ecosystem such as Data Clean Rooms, Universal IDs with Identity Graphs, and Modeled Measurement & Attribution.

However, there are ways of buying that can aid in privacy compliance:

### Contextual Targeting

- Uses video metadata instead of user data and is privacy-compliant. However it lacks precision and can miss behavioral intent and sequential storytelling.

### Outcome Based Buying

- **Outcome based buying** where brands purchase media based on specific outcomes across the video ecosystem, allowing for privacy-compliant collecting of data while harmonizing across channels.

## Example

In a hypothetical scenario, you could imagine a wellness brand, faced severe signal loss while launching a cross-channel video campaign amid cookie deprecation and platform privacy changes. CTV and FAST platforms offered only household-level data, social video wouldn't share user-level insights, and programmatic OLV had lost much of its tracking precision. As a result, the brand struggled with frequency capping, attribution, and creative optimization, ultimately wasting impressions and undermining ROI.

To adapt, the wellness brand built a layered solution: they used clean rooms to match CRM data to platform exposures, shifted to contextual targeting on CTV and OLV, and adopted outcome-based buying on YouTube and programmatic channels. While no single method restored full visibility, these tactics collectively formed a privacy-compliant, data-resilient approach that improved performance, reduced waste, and helped them navigate the evolving media landscape with greater confidence.

## Conclusion

Unified media planning, execution and measurement, today isn't clean. It's messy, improvised, and often inefficient. But it's evolving. While we may never fully eliminate fragmentation, we can build smarter systems to work across it. The best strategies don't aim to force everything into a single platform, they embrace complexity with flexible, modular solutions.

This is a patchwork playbook for a patchwork problem. Success lies not in perfection, but in integration: of data, teams, tech, and standards. If we can't eliminate the seams, we can at least make them hold.

## About IAB

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) empowers the media and marketing industries to thrive in the digital economy. Its membership comprises more than 700 leading media companies, brands, agencies, and the technology firms responsible for selling, delivering, and optimizing digital ad marketing campaigns. The trade group fields critical research on interactive advertising, while also educating brands, agencies, and the wider business community on the importance of digital marketing. In affiliation with the IAB Tech Lab, IAB develops technical standards and solutions. IAB is committed to professional development and elevating the knowledge, skills, expertise, and collaboration of the workforce across the industry. Through the work of its public policy office in Washington, D.C., the trade association advocates for its members and promotes the value of the interactive advertising industry to legislators and policymakers. Founded in 1996, IAB is headquartered in New York City.

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