

2020 REVIEW

ISBA is the only body in the UK that enables advertisers to understand their industry and shape its future, because it brings together a powerful network of marketers with common interests, empowers decision-making with knowledge and insight and gives a single voice to advocacy for the improvement of the industry.

A YEAR OF CHALLENGE AND CHANGE

On February 28, we held our 2020 Annual Conference, rich with agenda-setting content. With a keynote speaker unable to travel because of coronavirus, we responded swiftly and hosted our speaker virtually. We had little idea that this would be one of the last face-to-face events in the industry for a long time and that video links would be the only way we would interact with members for the rest of the year.

Marketers have been used to constant transformation for years, but the pace of change has accelerated exponentially since the country went into its first lockdown.

As an organisation we responded by talking to members and identifying what they needed. We set up a dedicated COVID-19 resource area on our website. We drew on the expertise of our partners and produced relevant guidance to help our members. We worked closely with broadcasters, to suspend and then amend their advance booking deadlines, giving members much needed flexibility in their media buying. We also worked with the IPA and the APA to help advertisers manage the commercial risks of advertising production, in the absence of the availability of cancellation insurance, by creating an [industry contract addendum](#).



DISINFORMATION

Disinformation, misinformation, hate-speech, harmful content, fake news: rising awareness of this type of internet-based content was brought into focus following the global condemnation of the killing of George Floyd in the US. The subsequent Black Lives Matter protests triggered an upsurge in reactionary and often coordinated extremist content masquerading as fact and designed to whip up societal divisions.

Members were obviously concerned that their advertising could inadvertently give this type of content credibility and in response to this growing issue, in July, ISBA published the [Disinformation and Hate Speech Guide](#).”

On May 6 we launched the findings of the [Programmatic Supply Chain Transparency](#) Study with the AOP by PwC. This ground-breaking study, the first to look at the supply chain ‘end to end’ sought to understand where programmatic advertisers’ money was actually spent and built on previous studies by the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) and in the US by the ANA (Association of National Advertisers). The 15-month study highlighted contractual difficulties in accessing data and the lack of consistency in data fidelity. Key findings were that publishers receive 51% of advertiser spend on average and 15% of advertiser spend – an “unknown delta”, representing around one-third of supply chain costs – could not be attributed, after taking other visible costs such as DSP/SSP fees and other technology costs into account. The study was welcomed globally and has led to the establishment of a cross-industry programmatic taskforce with the IAB, IPA and AOP and their members to transform the programmatic supply chain to allow advertisers and publishers to audit their campaigns and revenues end to end.

In July, the Prime Minister's encounter with COVID-19 led him to move the Government's approach to obesity up the agenda. Where previously Ministers had backed away from 'nanny state' measures, Number 10 announced its intention to implement a total ban for HFSS advertising online, and a 9pm watershed for the same products on TV. ISBA's position is clear: this decision is a disproportionate and unnecessary response to the stated policy objective of a proportionate reduction in children's exposure to HFSS advertising. It is also a proposal undermined by the Government's own evidence base. An unprecedented challenge has required an unprecedented response. We are working with our members in concert with the IAB, IPA and Advertising Association, as well as co-ordinating with the Food and Drink Federation, British Retail Consortium and others. However, we recognise that simply rejecting these proposals is not enough. We are seeking a self-regulatory response which better fulfils the Government's stated aim and defends the right to advertise online.

After over two years as President of ISBA, Elizabeth Fagan stood down. During her tenure she actively supported the transformation of ISBA to a robust advocacy and representation body and was a passionate supporter of the self-regulatory system. Our new President was named in July as Peter Duffy, Chief Executive of Moneysupermarket. This appointment is a significant one for ISBA, at a time when the marketing and advertising industry is changing rapidly; Peter brings a wealth of experience from innovative, digitally led businesses across multiple industries, which will be invaluable to ISBA's future development.

Our UK cross media measurement programme, [Origin](#) has made significant progress over the last year. In September, the WFA released their advertiser-centric framework for cross-media measurement, along with a draft technical proposal and handed the baton to Origin to explore how global principles and components can be deployed and adapted to suit the local market. Origin commissioned independent research from RSMB to assess the technical proposal and its encouraging report was released in November. Significant progress has been made on addressing other pillars of the project – metrics, standards, funding and governance. The project has been broadly backed by the digital industry and by ISBA's advertisers, for whom this remains the number one priority.



DOING THE RIGHT THING

We are committed to consistently reflecting on the role that advertising plays in wider society – and to ensuring that, as trade bodies, brands, and individuals, we do the right thing. That is why we played a central part in the launch of [Ad Net Zero](#) and Ad Green – to drive our industry's commitment to reaching real net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

The murder of George Floyd and the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement were defining moments of 2020. They have shone a light on the long-overdue need for lasting change not just in our industry, but in our society. ISBA joined brands and fellow trade bodies in taking a strong stand on the need for change in our industry – but also in taking concrete actions to drive that change, not just paying lip service to it.

All our members are working within their own companies on this urgent task. Our own Diversity and Inclusion Working Group was created to identify best practice and champion it, helping to tackle the lack of representation in advertising.”

THE YEAR AHEAD

Early in December we met with our Council and Executive Committee members to review our current priorities and ensure they are the right ones for the year ahead.

Our focus on cross-media measurement continues to be our number one goal. We also remain committed to:

- Lead our members in creating an advertising environment that delivers positive social and economic impact.
- Champion media, agency and digital supply chain relationships that deliver value for advertisers.
- Work with our community of members and with partners to deliver thought leadership, learning, advice and guidance.

We recognise that 2021 will bring its own challenges. But we are confident that we are doing the right things to support our members, and to ensure the advertising environment is fit for purpose.



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