

WHITEPAPER

**Creative**

**Automation, the**

**Future of Display**

**Advertising**

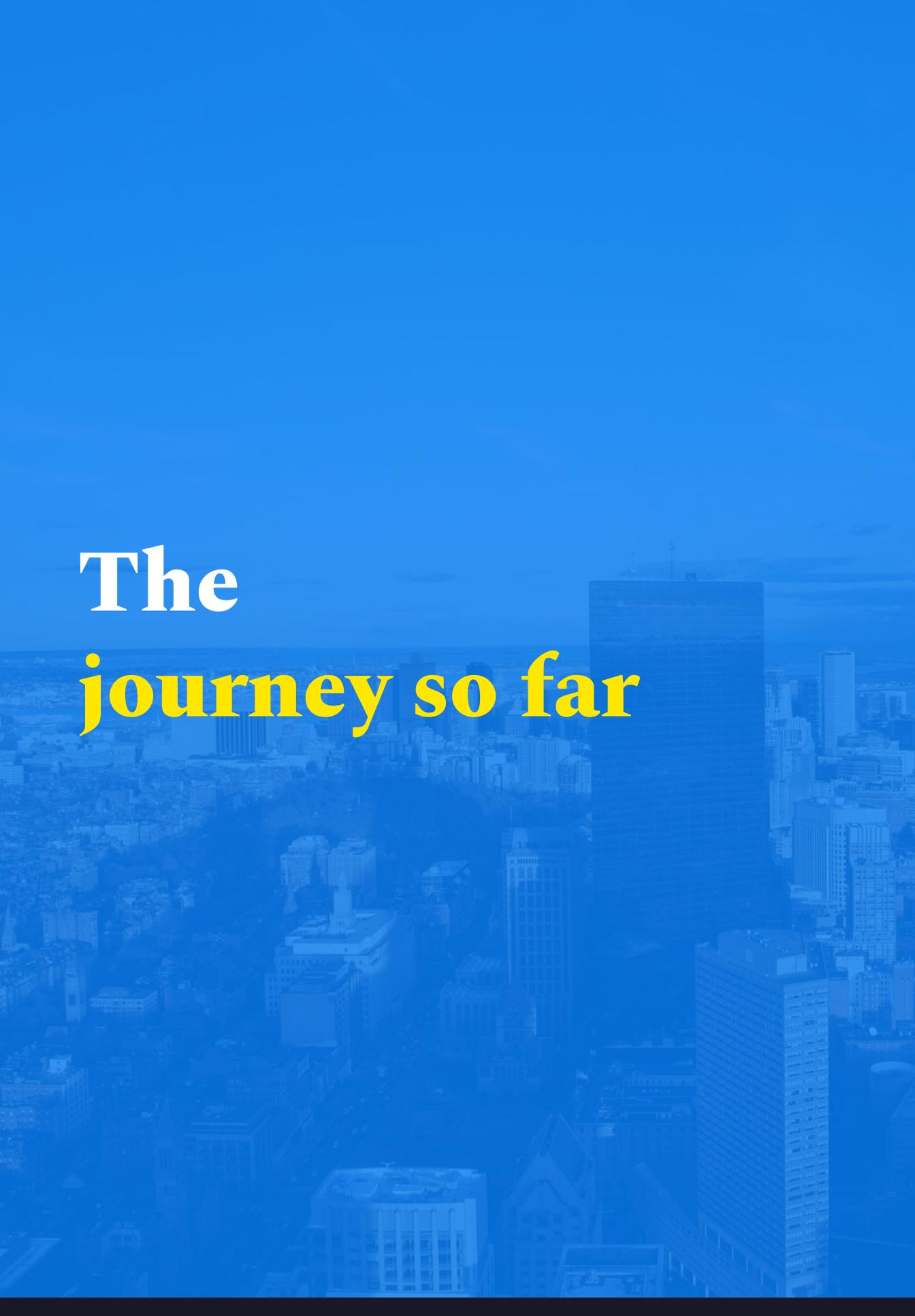


# Contents

---

## INTRODUCTION

- 01**    **The journey so far** / *How has display advertising evolved so far?*
- 02**    **The relevance today** / *What makes display banners so powerful today?*
- 03**    **What's next?** / *“Creation at scale” is the need of the future. But why?*
  - *The growing need for personalisation*
  - *The millennial mania for campaigns*
  - *An increasing number of SKUs*
  - *Language matters*
  - *Test variations until you succeed*
  - *The right format means the right impact*
- 04**    **The bottleneck** / *Why manual creative production cannot keep up?*
- 05**    **Welcome, automation** / *How creative automation can create thousands of display ads in a single click*

An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, viewed from a high angle. The image is heavily overlaid with a semi-transparent blue color. The text 'The journey so far' is superimposed on the left side of the image. The word 'The' is in white, and 'journey so far' is in yellow. The background shows a dense cluster of skyscrapers and buildings, with a prominent dark skyscraper in the center-right.

# The journey so far

# How has display advertising evolved so far?

## How it all began?

Display advertising has come a long way since its inception. It all started on October 27, 1994, when AT&T placed a banner on Wired magazine's online site that announced: "Have you ever clicked your mouse right here? You will."



That single ad had a Click Through Rate of a whopping 44%. Try comparing that to an average CTR of 0.06% today!

## The advent of targeting

As the 90s progressed, banner ads became more and more popular which saw the rise of targeting. Marketers began to target specific user segments based on demographics. Companies started reaching out to relevant audiences, and third party websites began to display banners that were relevant to the audience.

## Pop-Ups Show Up

In 1997, pop-up ads popped up. Looking back, it's clear that these were disliked because of their intrusive nature, but they seemed to be effective nevertheless. By the early 2000s, web browsers were equipped with pop-up blockers. While pop-ups did not completely go away, marketers started looking out for more holistic ways to use display ads to drive their proposition.

## Competition from Search Ads

By the turn of the century, paid search and pay-per-click practices began. Search engines became hugely popular as a way to navigate the rapidly expanding Internet, and thus sponsored search quickly became an important digital marketing tool. It was a search engine called GoTo.com, later bought by Yahoo, that introduced the first pay-for-placement search engine service. Advertisers were asked to bid for top search results based on keywords. Something we're all too familiar with nowadays.

Despite 'Search Ads' being effective given that they were associated with high user intent, display ads continued to stay powerful owing to their visual appeal as well as wider reach. The two major objectives for which display ads still continue to rule are "Awareness" and "Retargeting"



*Display ads use a 'push' approach, while search ads use a 'pull' approach. If the search volume for relevant keywords is low, brands benefit more from creating display ads that help in creating more awareness around the brand and products.*

## Google introduces AdWords

This was when Google introduced AdWords in 2000, which combined a sponsored search experience that generated revenue with quality and relevancy of search results. AdWords introduced a Quality Score model. This considered an ad's clickthrough rate when determining search results placement. This meant that even if an ad had a lower bid, a high click-through rate meant it would appear above other, less relevant paid ads in search results.

## Display ads go native



Around 2010, there came a new wave of content consumption on social media. Advertisers started leveraging this mania through the use of native ads. Native ads allowed them to place promotional content on a web page in-line with the native content of the page. This experience was less intrusive for a user and hence more effective to drive home their promotional message. In the next few years, with the advent of media platforms like Mashable and BuzzFeed, Native advertising spread like wildfire.

An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, viewed from a high angle. The image is heavily overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'The relevance today' is superimposed on the left side of the image. The word 'The' is in white, 'relevance' is in white, and 'today' is in yellow. The background shows a dense cluster of skyscrapers and buildings, with a large, dark, rectangular building standing out prominently on the right side. The sky is a pale blue, and the overall atmosphere is modern and urban.

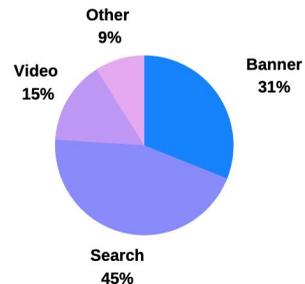
# The relevance today

## What makes display ads so powerful today?

*Annual Display advertising spend worldwide (in billion USD)*



*Advertising format revenue (FY 2018)*



Since the advent of display advertising, there have been debates on how effective is display advertising. However, it has stood the test of time and has evolved itself along the journey of internet. Marketers have learnt how to tap its maximum potential by making it more appealing, more relevant and more contextual for their target users.

Despite the increasing number of ad blockers and higher competition from other forms of advertising, Display advertising takes a good chunk in the marketing budgets and the money spent on display ads is only increasing year on year.

**“Banner revenues totaled \$33.5 billion in FY 2018, representing a 21.9% increase from FY 2017 (\$27.5 billion). “**

Let's look at the reasons that make display ads very effective in the current times.

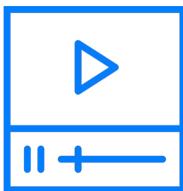
### **It's the era of visuals**

There is no denying that visuals rule the world of internet today. When it comes to highlighting a business proposition, a carefully designed visual creative is far more powerful than any other type of content out there. If display ads are aesthetically made and shown to the audience at the right time and in the right context, they could be really powerful in driving a business objective.



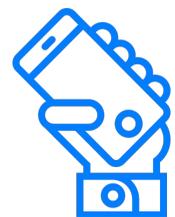
### **The advent of the Video format**

If an image speaks a thousand words, video does it 24 times per second. With an ever increasing use of videos and GIFs in display ads, brands now get a much bigger real-estate to tell engaging stories to their online audience. As per an [IAB report](#), video accounts for one-fifth of the total display ads market in Europe.



### **Mobile is fueling the growth**

From beautiful smartphone and tablet full page flex ads to engaging in-feed display ads, mobile platforms have given a new dimension to display ads lately. Advertising revenues from mobile devices continue to [grow faster](#) than the overall market, with mobile increasing its revenue share to 65.1% in 2018.



An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, viewed from a high angle. The image is heavily overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "What's next?" is prominently displayed in the center-left area. The word "What's" is in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font, while "next?" is in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background shows a dense cluster of skyscrapers and buildings, with a large, dark, rectangular building standing out in the mid-ground on the right side. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, and the overall atmosphere is one of a modern, urban environment.

**What's next?**

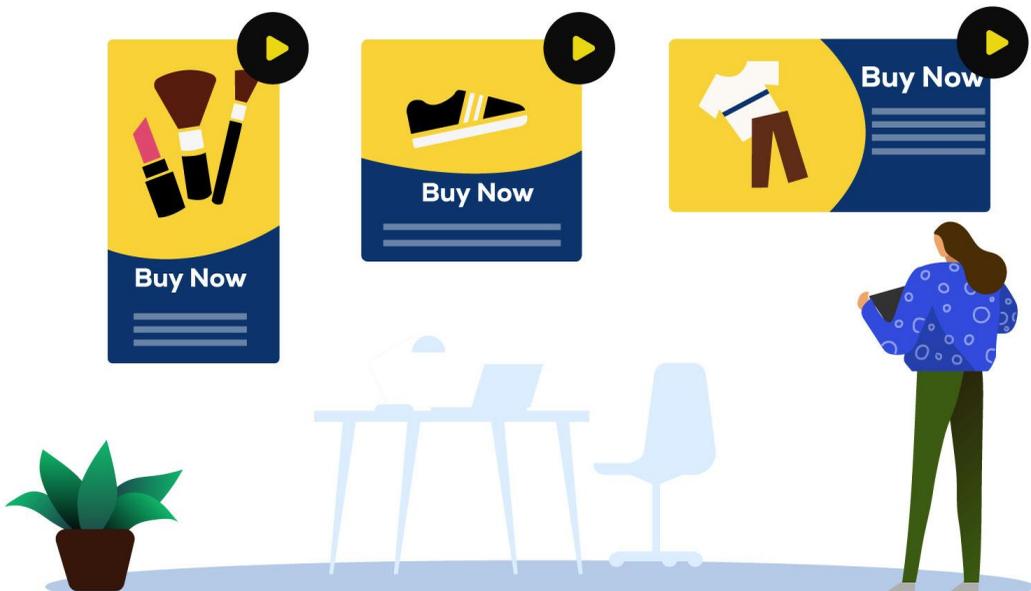
## “Creation at scale” is the need of the future. But why?

One of the fundamental jobs of advertising is to establish a meaningful connection between your brand and your customer. With an overload of content out there on internet, the only way to build a strong connection is through **relevance**.



*51% of consumers today expect that companies will anticipate their needs and make relevant suggestions while they communicate.*

With the advent of data-driven approach to marketing, you can now gather deep knowledge about each and every customer in terms of their behaviour and preferences. With so much information at your disposal, it just does not make sense to create a ‘one-fit for all’ solution. Winning marketing strategies today need to connect with each individual with utmost relevance by targeting them with the right kind of messaging, through the right set of channels and at the right moments in their customer journey.

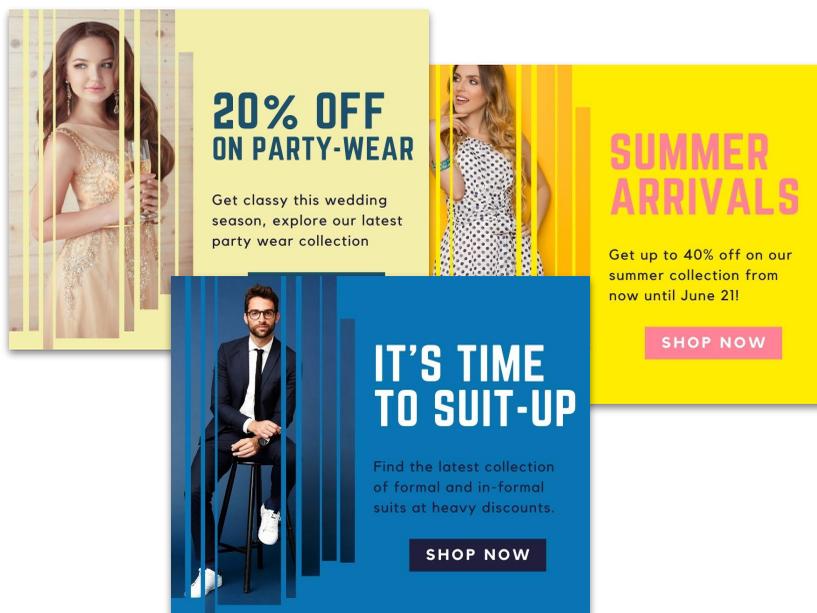


This is where the element of ‘scale’ comes in for display ads production. Brands are already seeing the value in creating multivariate advertising experiences split on numerous parameters. Let us look at some of the key factors that are speeding the need for making thousands of display ad creatives.

## The growing need for personalisation

Gone are the old days of analog advertising when one ad or one campaign would be enough to reach out to a wide segment. Consumers nowadays expect communication that is relevant to them. They want to be treated as individuals and not just as a ‘user-base’.

As a marketer, it becomes crucial to create fine segments of users based on numerous criteria and target them with relevant ad creatives that connect with them at a personal level. The more they understand their customers and segment them finer, the more will be the need to produce a large variation of creatives.

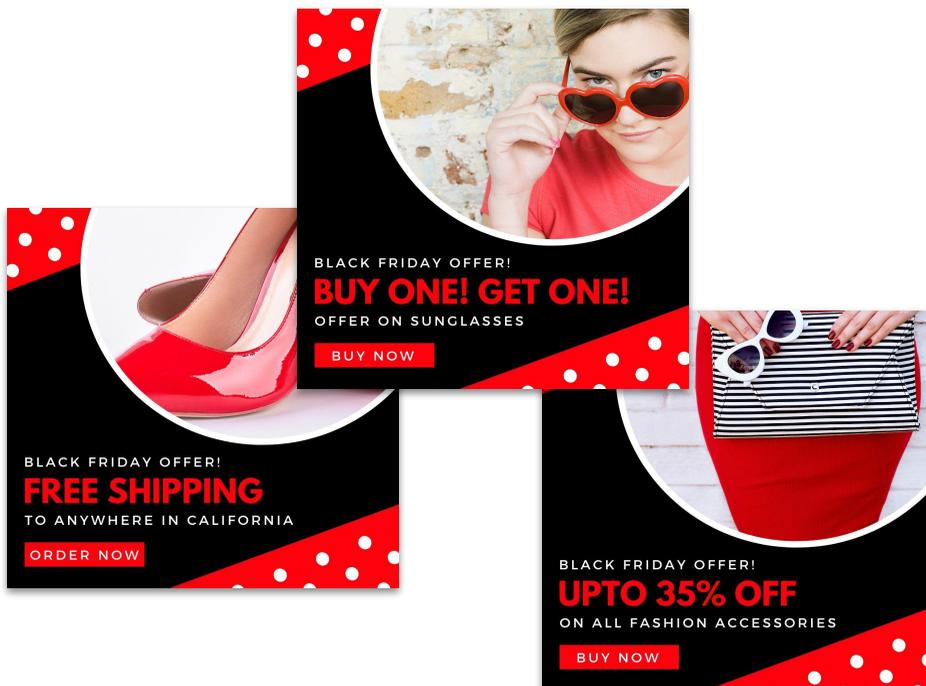


*In-house marketers who are personalizing their web experiences on average, [a 19% uplift in sales.](#)*

## The millennial mania for campaigns

More often than not, expenditure on display ads is a part of a bigger marketing campaign that would usually be tied to a sale, a festive reason or an ongoing trend.

Thanks to social media, the concept of campaigns has never been as widely spread as it is today. Owing to deep penetration and high persuasiveness of social media, most marketers today do not want to miss out on leveraging on-going trending subjects. The concept of campaigns is all the more relevant for verticals like e-commerce, fashion and food where brands usually run at least 20-25 campaigns in every quarter. Such campaigns almost always lead to a massive need for a large number of creative assets like banners and videos to be used for display ads.



In the US, [Black Friday online sales beat all previous records](#), reaching \$7.4bn, up from \$6.2bn on Black Friday 2018.

## An increasing number of SKUs

Let's focus our attention on the number of SKUs that have to be sold and promoted. Guess what, Amazon currently claims to have a whopping 3 billion listings on its platform. The number stands at 1.4 billion for eBay. With an increasing amount of money being spent on retargeting ads and sponsored posts, marketers are now leveraging multi-channel ad targeting along the user journey for each possible purchase. This level of product-oriented targeting is bound to give rise to the requirement of a very large number of display creatives to be made on a regular basis.



As per a [report from Criteo](#), website visitors who are retargeted are more likely to convert by 43%.

## Language matters

Further, have you considered that 70% of global users don't cite English as their native language? Yes, English is still the top internet language, but that's not the case when it comes to being a first language, and one that consumers feel most comfortable using. To act on this and seize the opportunity, you need a multilingual advertising strategy.



Display creatives in different languages can quickly reach out to and convert prospects into loyal consumers. In this scenario, creatives need to be rejigged into various languages for an effective, added layer of personalisation.

Search engines, online video platforms, and social media are already capitalising on this trend with language keyboards and content in the vernacular – some of which receive millions of views daily. If creatives are not effectively transcoded into these languages, there's a large chunk of the audience that is either being ignored, or simply not being reached in the most effective manner.

## Test variations until you succeed

One of the great advantages of digital advertising is the cost-effective ability to test creatives and to learn and apply the results. When it comes to display ads, such tests offer data that shouldn't be ignored for communication optimisation and an increased ROI.

This is the best way to optimise the parts of your message, such as headline, image, copy, or even call to action. It calls for the right tools, the right processes and, of course, variants of the ads themselves that will be put to the test. Each element of the ad can be tested, and rich data can be gathered on how consumers react.

When the budget is tight and when the competition is fierce, such testing can mean the difference between success and failure. A creative simply has to step up to the task at such times. An important point to note in all this is that one cannot afford delays. The creative variations have to get online fast.



*A study from Invesp suggests that 60 percent of companies believe A/B testing is highly valuable for conversion rate optimization.*

## The right format means the right impact

Another aspect of display advertising that you should consider is the variety in the number of ad formats. There are many platforms that consumers use online nowadays for their various needs. To reach out to them across all of these, you need ads that are optimised to those pages. In this way, a savvy marketer can communicate seamlessly across the online experience.

On video streaming platforms, there's the ad itself, the pre-roll, and the interactive pre-roll. The pocket-sized screens of mobile phones mean another format for the best visibility. Search engines and social media pages again have their own variations of ads. New platforms and new formats are coming up almost every day. On all of these, the ad dimensions, aspect ratios, length, file size, and more, can vary.

With this many platforms and formats to cater to, you definitely need a large number of display creatives to be designed.



An aerial view of a city skyline, likely New York City, with a prominent dark blue skyscraper in the foreground. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'The bottleneck' is superimposed on the left side of the image.

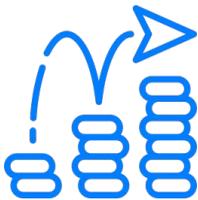
# The bottleneck

# Why manual creative production cannot keep up?

Given the need of many variations that arise from personalisation, languages, SKUs, testing, and formats, to scale up manually is a huge undertaking. Let's break down the time, costs and other factors at play in the manual approach.

## Quick Turnarounds

The internet today is a fast-moving place. display ads need to be done quickly. Ongoing trends have to be capitalised on and hence banner variations have to be made in a jiffy! With manual production, every step takes added time.



## High Production Costs

In many cases, making 1,000 creatives in a single week is a real need and possibility. That takes a huge number of designers working full-time to achieve. Is it cost-efficient to manage, handle, and reimburse this large team?

## Countless revisions

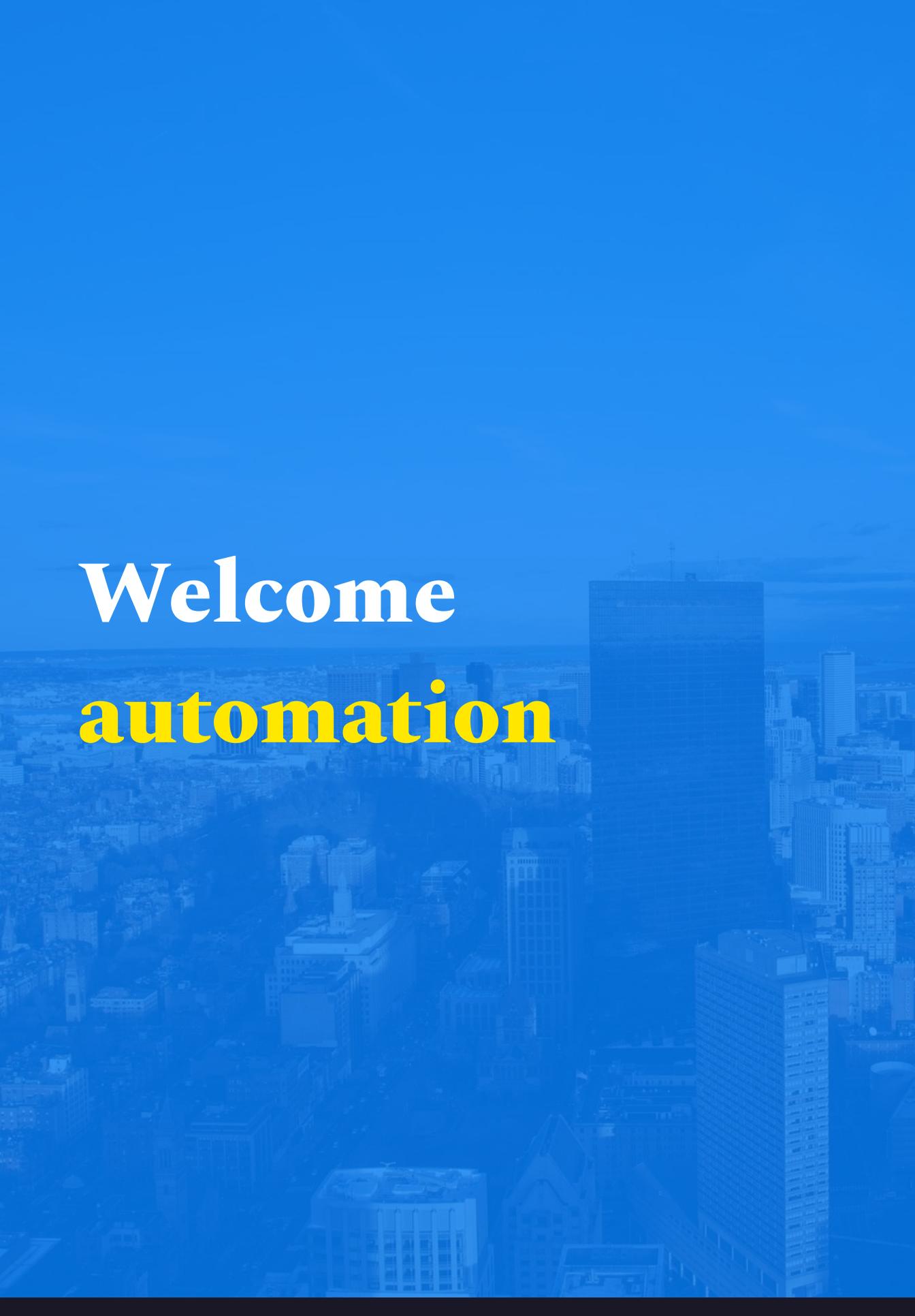
We already know that the approval of a successful piece of creative is an iterative process. Quite often, designers face a lot of to-and-fro work while trying to adhere to different platform guidelines. All these changes when done manually take up a lot of time and resources



## **Drudgery and Low Morale**

Owing to repetitive changes in creatives across formats, much of the work is repetitive and non-creative. This can lead to dissatisfaction among designers, and overall low morale rather than freeing up time for a creatively satisfying endeavor.



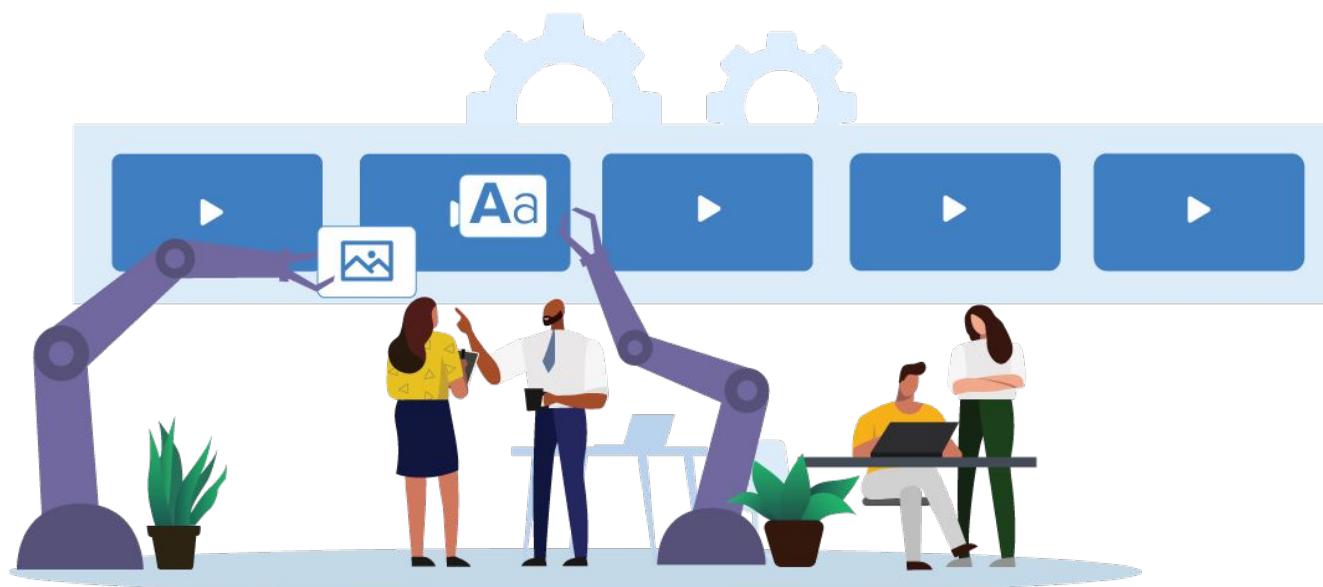
An aerial view of a city skyline, likely New York City, with a prominent dark blue skyscraper in the foreground. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'Welcome automation' is centered on the left side of the image.

# Welcome automation

## How creative automation can create thousands of display ads in a single click

The growing requirement for display creatives at scale and the need for faster turnaround times has led to the need for smarter solutions in this space. Creative automation tools like [Rocketium](#) are allowing brands to smartly convert their data feed into banner variants in a matter of seconds. This has led to a new revolution in digital advertising where the ad copy, design and imagery is highly relevant for every user in the buying journey.

This has led to much higher CTRs for display ads and hence a much better ROI on the money they are spending on performance marketing campaigns. Creative automation has also cut down the boring redundant work done by design teams where they had to manually create hundreds of variants of ads for different products, for different offer data, for different channels and in different layouts, languages and design variations.



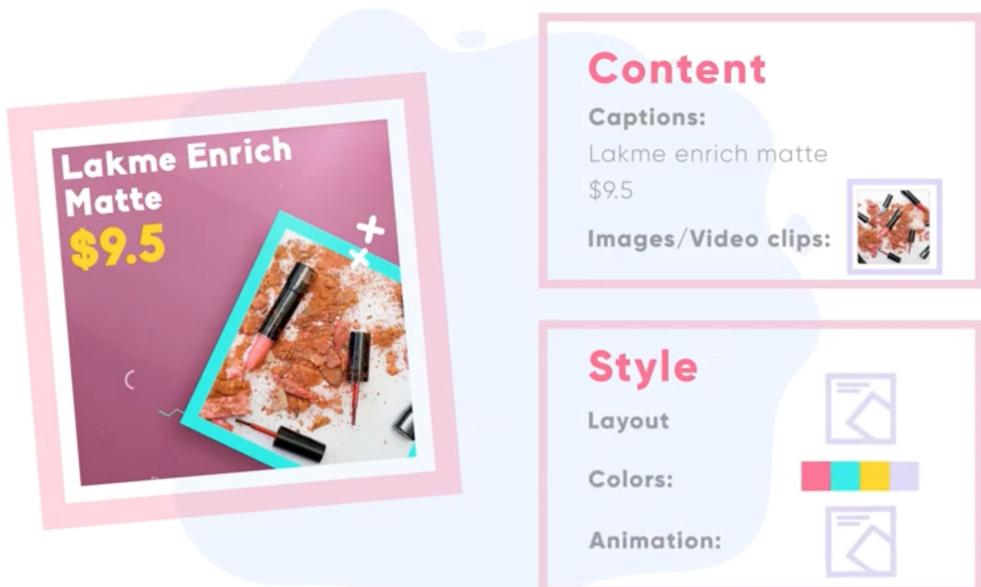
## How does Rocketium work?

The workflow for visual creative automation is just 3 simple steps. Let's see how this works:

### Step-1: Template creation

The first step for producing visual creatives at scale is to create a custom design template that can act as a mold for your visual creatives - both images and videos. So what does a template mean?

- A template is a skeleton layout that consists of two types of elements; content elements and style elements.
- Depending on the variant requirements you can configure some elements to be fixed and others to be variable.
- Templates can be designed using an easy drag and drop template builder interface from Rocketium which gives you complete creative control to create custom-branded templates
- You can also create templates using traditional design tools like Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator and import them into Rocketium.

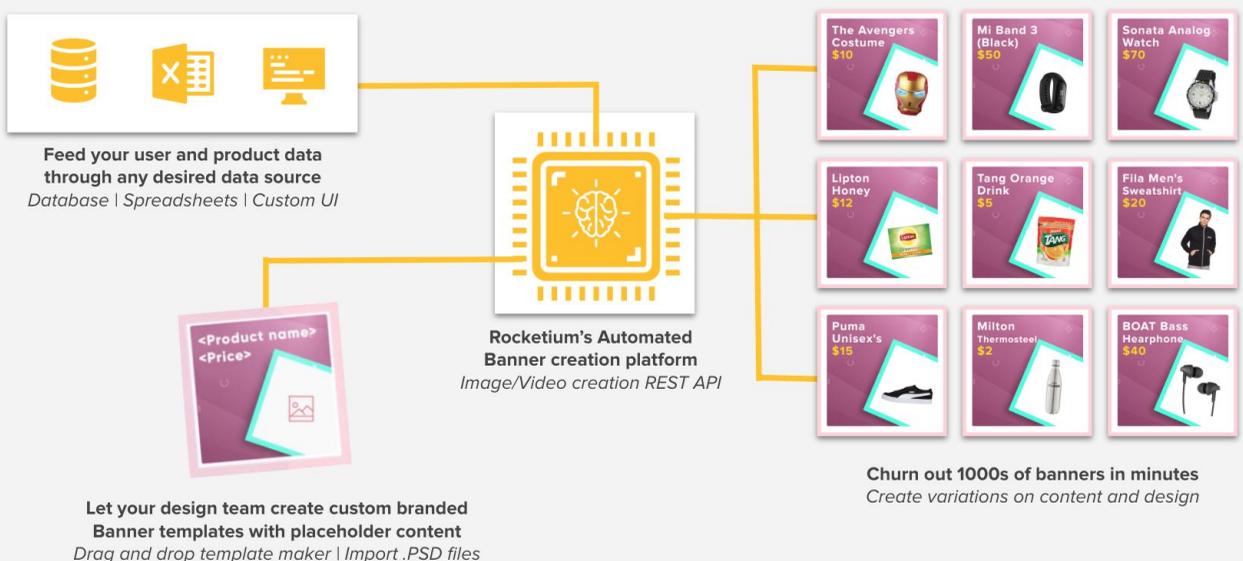


## Step-2: Data input

The next step is to feed the data input into the template. This could be done in any flexible way based on where your data resides. Here are some of the most commonly used methods

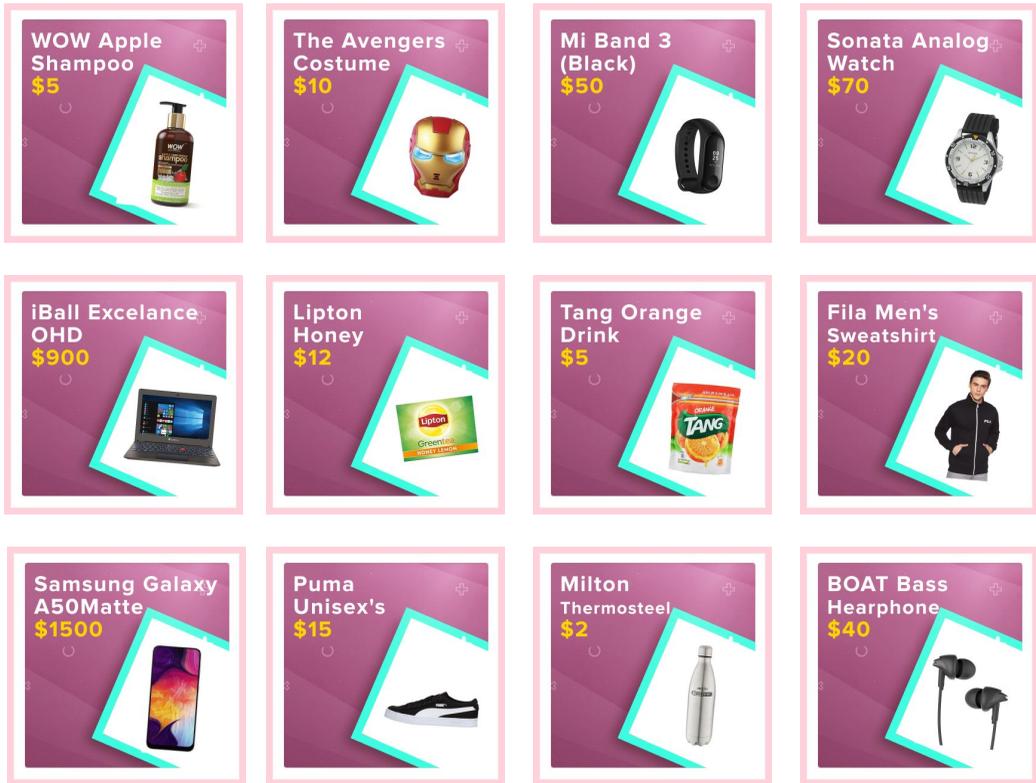
- **Data can reside in your database** from where it can be programmatically sent to Rocketium as an input while making an API call.
- Rocketium can also fetch **data from a spreadsheet** or any other similar structure data source.
- Data can also be **filled by your users** through a form-based UI that can be integrated on to your platform or as a white-labeled standalone interface.
- Rocketium API could be used for sending **real-time data generated in your application** to produce visual creatives from dynamically changing data.

### How it works?



### Step-3: Rendering

This is the step where the magic happens. The data sent to the video creation engine automatically feeds it into the custom-designed template and churns out images and videos in a matter of seconds.



### Step-4: Publishing creatives

Whether you want to share these creatives over email, publish on to your platform or post over a social channel, a custom workflow can be configured by Rocketium's engineering team to automatically release the visual creatives onto your desired channels.



WRITTEN BY

**Jatin Kumar Rastogi**

Product Marketing Manager, Rocketium

Looking for an automated  
solution to produce

# Display ads at scale?



Learn more at  
[rocketium.com/api](https://rocketium.com/api)

