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# The 2020 Election Effect on Digital Marketing

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**With the influx of political ads, marketers will have to fight for consumer attention this election cycle.**

Your brand is not running for president, but the 2020 election cycle has everything to do with how digital advertisers will manage costs, competition, and clutter this fall.

## Politics Goes Programmatic

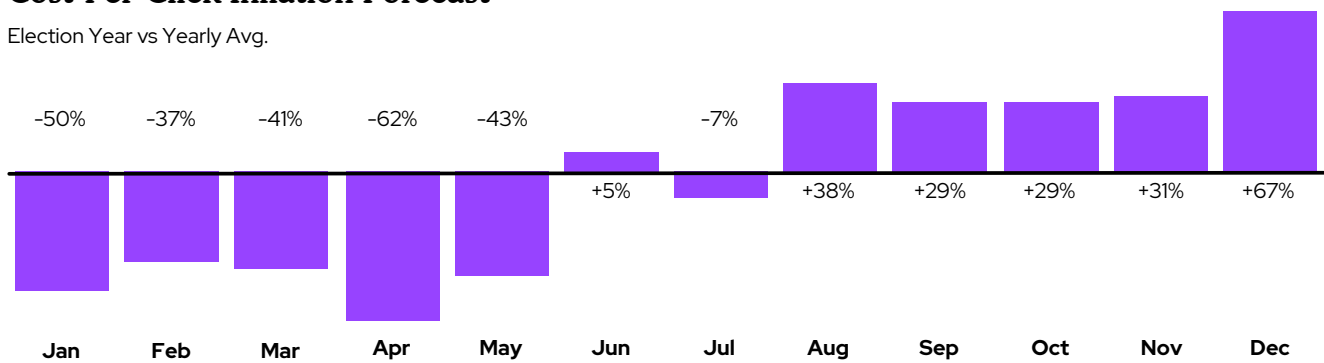
Every autumn, marketers anticipate increased competition for digital inventory from the influx of seasonally aligned campaigns. This year, however, it's clear that brands must brace their strategies for additional strains on the marketplace resulting from what many consider to be the most electric election cycle in over a decade.

Political ad spending for the 2020 election will eclipse the \$6 billion spent in 2016, surpassing \$10 billion USD, which will undoubtedly crowd the marketplace this Q4. Marketers and politicians alike are utilizing a wider array of media channels this election cycle to cast the largest net possible and reach more citizens, forcing brands to formulate new digital strategies in order to break through the clutter.

While all media channels benefit from the increased political ad spending, it's predicted that digital media will grow the most due to the \$1 billion revenue generated from political ads alone. Programmatic display, mobile, and connected TV (CTV) are nothing new to savvy marketers, but as politicians put them into practice, computational politics will consequently change how brands are able to engage with consumers online forever.

## Cost-Per-Click Inflation Forecast

Election Year vs Yearly Avg.



Of the interrelated digital media and marketing industry trends that play a role in re-shaping digital strategies during the 2020 election, the most influential one is advanced social media. Since COVID-19 canceled in-person rallies and conventions, social media has emerged as the main stage for political engagement. The expanding usage of social platforms enables political campaigns to access rich sets of personal data, further develop personalized campaigns, and elevate their abilities to test countless messaging elements on individual users.

**“ ... brands must prepare for mass consumer ad fatigue as election day draws near, especially in swing states...”**

This topic alone has put Facebook in the congressional hot-seat (i.e. 2016 Russian interference scandal) and caused Pinterest, Twitter, and other high-profile platforms to ban political ads entirely. The increased political activity on social media, along with new data-privacy legislation and internal fact-checking policies, make it more difficult for brands to effectively reach target audiences this fall while maintaining a brand-safe environment.

This is especially prevalent as ad approval guidelines increase stringency to mitigate growing consumer concerns with “fake news.” Similar to last election year, the costs for advertisers are anticipated to increase by as much as 38% in August, with heightened costs persisting through election day, into the holiday season.

By understanding which channels are being utilized in the 2020 political campaigns, and how their presence affects consumer attitudes toward digital media, marketers are able to pierce the noise with both paid and organic content, providing a much-welcomed digital escape for their audiences. Nevertheless, with increased competition for ad space, brands must prepare for mass consumer ad fatigue as election day draws near, especially in swing states where geo-targeted inventory is a hot commodity. While political campaigns have always relied heavily on television, the major spike in demand for a digital alternative can be attributed to the promise of premium inventory with high-viewability, limited ad breaks, share of voice caps, and untapped placement audiences.

The most notable developments to TV ads over the past few years is the expansion of data-targeting capabilities via CTV, driven in part by the consumer’s rapid adoption of numerous streaming services. As a result, traditional political TV campaigns have taken note and are bleeding onto unregulated streaming and digital video platforms like Youtube, Peacock, and PlutoTV.

This is why it's critical for brands to ensure their digital video ads break through the onscreen monotony in order to stand a chance at connecting with consumers. Brands can do this by capitalizing on sentiments of the time; ads that champion values and morals may perform better, striking a chord with viewers during an election cycle that, at times, lacks both.

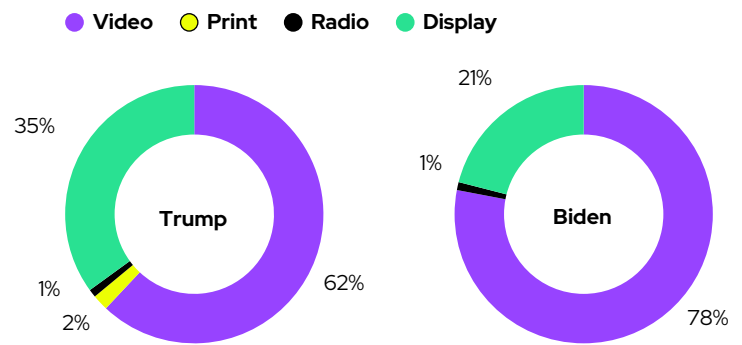
Managing cost efficiency remains a priority for marketers, and embracing a more holistic media investment strategy now will give businesses more advertising mileage in the ensuing months. As November 2020 approaches, marketers can expect increased competition for ad bids and keywords, with growing consumer apathy towards ads that will lead to lower click-through and conversion rates.

Although many brands do plan for peak seasons by reserving placements upfront, the influx of political ad campaigns will disrupt these plans. "Bumping" may occur as the campaigns outbid marketers with established deals due to their significantly larger spend in Q4, forcing vendors to issue make-goods after the election to rectify any lapses in media availability.

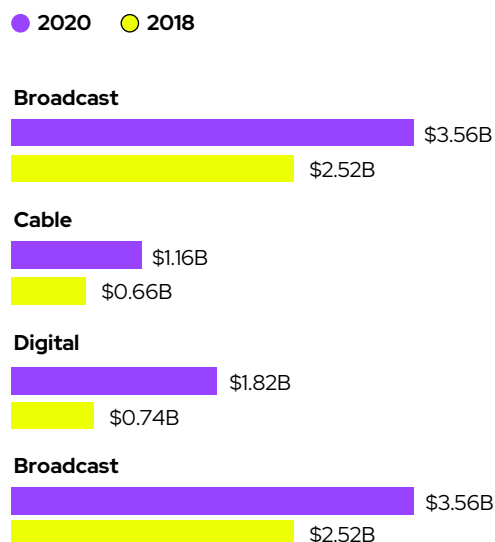
While political ad campaigns typically flight 10 weeks of activity that peaks on election day, this year has kicked off earlier in order to influence those voting by mail. Marketers should anticipate any strains from the election on the digital marketplace to take effect sooner as well. Most importantly, marketers should make sure their brands have a pivot plan in place so that if digital advertising costs or competition volume become too high, they can react accordingly.

Although achieving success on digital campaigns may take some re-strategizing this election cycle, it is possible. To stay ahead of the competition, consider proactively fine-tuning social, video, and investment strategies for the 2020 political season.

## 2020 Presidential Campaign Media Weights



## Projected Top-line Comparison by Media Type



## Sources

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2. **Digiday** - Nothing Typical About This Year's Political Ad Market
3. **Kantar/CMAG** - 2020 Political Ad Spend: Updated Projections
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7. **eMarketer** - Political Content on Social Media 2020