The Subject

Open AP: Open Identity

Oen A.P. has a unique position in the marketplace. The value proposition is not complicated, if not obvious. However, the goal to "remove silos across publishers, screens, and currencies," in television and other video formats belies a distinguishing characteristic of large publishers that control engaged audiences. They don't like to share.

The fact that OpenAP is owned by the largest publishers in the world, jointly, positively evidences the opportunity for their collaboration goals to be in reach. Additionally, they have the benefit of being right. While that doesn't always matter, in this case being right about collaboration could be tantamount to success.

The Claim

[OpenAP has created Open Identity,](#) which is a centralized Graph connecting multiple ID spines and data providers for the purposes of uniting brand and marketer audience pools to publisher inventory. Mapping these disparate data sets serves to create an environment that promotes more efficiency, scale, ID matches, and ultimately, dollars flowing through the CTV ecosystem.

The data partners that makeup the founding cohort include:
1. Acxiom: Traditional identify spine, bought by Ad Holding Co., Interpublic Group
2. Deep Sync: Data aggregation and audience generation platform
3. Experian: Credit company that connecting PII, device, and audience attributes
4. LiveRamp: Data aggregation and publisher identity via automated traffic (ATS)
5. TransUnion: Credit company leveraging Data Management Platform tech

These data partners reflect the claim. Only Acxiom is owned by an entity that serves marketers, meaning OpenAP will also be willing to work with the other Holdco data spines like Epsilon and AmeriLINK.

How it Works

To remove silos in CTV multiple data providers, PII, audience attributes, and privacy rules and preferences aligned inside privacy tech is required. OpenAP built a cleanroom for this, in conjunction with Snowflake (also an investor), called OpenData Hub. They've built this collaborative cleanroom claiming to be able to crosswalk multiple ID sets to improve match rates and validate performance measurement.

This allows OpenAP to map marketer data to publisher identifiers for the purpose of sharing collaborated data in siloed environments.

Then comes OpenID itself, which claims to join these data, publishers, attributes, and activation metrics into one framework. This centralization of assets allows OpenID to be a universal spine to support interoperability and speed of connectivity.

The -ablement

This product enables deeper insight into multi-platform behavior of an ID or individual with multiple ID's that are typically disconnected. The ability to efficiently mix audience characteristics, viewing behavior, performance, and do so on one interoperable identifier is unique.

Today, many marketers have difficulty with data movement. The promise of pushing PII into a cleanroom environment that hosts these various cuts of data theoretically supports confidence and speed to market through deeper insights to improve buying decisions. Additionally, OpenAP promises to provide performance data, which opens up Investment decisioning and advanced analysis at agencies.

The Quiet Part

Thus far the audience data is still somewhat limited based on the sources previously mentioned, and thorough insights on niche audiences will likely be limited until a greater breadth of data sources are included. Based on the press release it is unclear if the OpenID data schema will accept source attributes to be a workaround for this limitation.

With Snowflake supporting the cleanroom environment, naturally cost should be considered. Snowflake's technology is best-in-class and is priced as such. Marketers should consider cost-benefit in the equation, especially given this will be viewed as 'non-working media,' dollars.

The performance angle is one marketing science analysts support. Technically enabling this could be difficult, however. Questions to consider are numerous. First, is OpenID available in the demand side bid stream and as such captured in logs? If not, what is the publisher's responsibility to provide data back in full and on time? Ask anyone who works with Commerce data, the difficulty in that.

The cleanroom environment is the likely destination for querying the data and will require large publishers to share a performance taxonomy that allows marketers to match activity one-to-one across unique destinations. At this point, we do not know how amenable the premium marketplace is to shared dimensions.

Last, the limited number of publishers currently signed up puts a governor on unbridled excitement. The fact that OpenID was previously integrated into prominent SSP's is a positive step in ad tech collaboration, but the lack of publishers that can read/write OpenID's limits the impact of the technical achievement.

The To-Do

This is a viable product to test out but you must get your first party data house in order. Additionally, decide how the performance data will be evaluated against brand analytical models that are not inside OpenData Hub.

Audiences

Use a customer data platform (CDP) or data lake to organize customer data and define audiences with currently available attributes. Then, come to a consensus on additional information you would like to know and scout the OpenID attribute avails to determine if those audiences fill the gaps. The goal is to create more unique audiences that allow for more granular targeting or creative orchestration.

Performance

Gain an understanding of the details associated with pulling data from OpenData Hub. This includes knowing what, if any, k-anonymous value they've set to share the data to the marketer. Most marketers have dealt with distributed data sets for years now, so this will help determine what granularity to measure this against and how to evaluate the performance of a video buy against the rest of the digital activation. Second, how will the data be delivered? As a file, through an API, the cleanroom query environment? This changes the cadence one can expect for updates, impacting the optimization schedule.

The Impact

The idea and perceived execution are a step in the right direction. Interoperability is the key to making this privacy-centric ecosystem function. There are limitations and questions to some details to activate, measure, and optimize campaigns using this technology that OpenAP should have Solutions Consultants and Account Managers to help marketers navigate through. While Video was nearly 2/3rds of digital ad spend in 2024 according to eMarketer, marketers will need to assess their premium budget to determine the level of impact this has on a campaign or big idea.

Additionally, this impacts the entire agency buying apparatus, to make it functionally useful.

- Audience Strategists will have access to potentially different audience attributes than they currently use to define audiences. How will they reconcile those characteristics?
- Planners will have a 'premium' portion of the buy that they can target and measure video ads cross-platform and will ultimately need to determine if they will eschew the long-tail or create separate digital plans.
- Investment will have to determine the cost-benefit analysis of adding this cost in time and real dollars (though we don't have insight here) to this plan to see if it should become a large part of the overall ad mix.
- Analysts have a host of considerations as previously mentioned. One that has not been previously mentioned is the impact that yet another distributed data set has on Business Intelligence (BI) and Data Operations pros. They'll have to decide to dashboard these metrics or report them separately. The latter may limit universal adoption.

Separately, Strategy Teams may be responsible for a new layer of creative orchestration, given the availability of frequency metrics to story-tell and deliver relevance based on audience, location, time, and unique audience attributes. To this point, maybe we will next see OpenAP match with an agnostic ad server ID.

The Competition

With its large market share and distribution, YouTube and, to some extent, YouTube TV will be the most impacted by a change like this. Two areas of concern for YouTube will be performance data granularity and the collective interoperability of audience data shared across premium publishers.


Conclusion

The question is whether this leads to a more revelatory movement than a moment. It should. The idea is sound, and regardless of calling out where it currently seems to fail in thoroughness of partners, it shines in thoroughness of connectivity. OpenAP has created a truly centralized ecosystem for a specific purpose with an aligned ID spine, privacy tech, publisher buy-in/participation, data providers, and marketer interest. This is a space to watch.
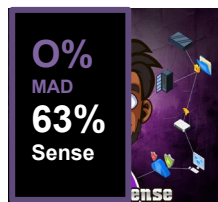
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MADSense-O-Meter Explanation

On the MADSense-O-Meter this makes good sense. Given the scale of YouTube and the unlikelihood of partnership with the Google owned organization, there is some room for improvement. Also, the fact that the longtail is not represented is a miss. However, that can be rectified, and small publishers would likely jump at the chance for monetization through a methodology that allows them to maintain control of their data assets. This is especially true given the likely divestiture of Google's sell side ad server.

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