



The Media Planning Guide for Cultural Attractions

The 4 rules to follow when planning
your cultural attraction's next paid
advertising campaign.

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Created for:

Zoos

Aquariums

Gardens

The four rules for a disciplined media mix

Over the last 10 years of working with cultural attractions, we've seen that our most effective media plans have followed four simple rules.

01

The Bucket Rule

Separate media into Impactful and Opportunistic channels.

02

The 60-40 Rule

Allocate 60% of your media budget to Impactful channels.

03

The 5% Rule

Don't spread your budget too thin across too many channels.

04

The Social Rule

Reserve meaningful budget for paid social video.

Media is either Impactful or Opportunistic

Every media channel - from broadcast television to influencer marketing - fits into one of two buckets: Impactful or Opportunistic.

Opportunistic media channels prioritize *high-quantity* ad placements.

Impactful media channels prioritize *high-quality* ad placements.

	Opportunistic Media Channels	Impactful Media Channels
Targeting	Audience-first	Placement-first
Ad environment	Small screens are okay; typically a one-to-one experience	Large; audio and/or visual; typically a shared experience
Objective	High frequency	High reach
Why we invest	A reasonable chance the target can buy a ticket	Elevates the brand and creates excitement about the attraction

Media channels by type

The most common media channels fall into either the Opportunistic or Impactful bucket.

This exercise is similar to the classic marketing funnel, which maps the consumer journey through awareness, interest, intent, and action.

Our approach is simpler. We look at media channels as either a brand elevator or a sales driver.

The key is striking the right balance between the two.

Opportunistic channels	Impactful channels
Paid Social Meta, TikTok, Pinterest, Snapchat	TV Broadcast, cable, connected TV
Paid Search	Radio Terrestrial, streaming
Digital Display	Outdoor
Digital Video YouTube, desktop and mobile	Influencer
Direct Mail	Print

Start with 60% Impactful and 40% Opportunistic

60%

IMPACTFUL

Each attraction is unique. Your target audience, ad budget, market, and organizational goals will determine the media mix that is right for your institution.

We created The 6O-4O Rule to help prevent overreliance on any one media type.

We need the brand-building power of Impactful channels like TV and radio.

40%

OPPORTUNISTIC

At the same time, we need to sell tickets, promote events, and increase annual memberships.

Opportunistic channels like paid social and Google Search are designed to do that.

In our experience, we've found that a 6O-4O mix between brand and promotion is a strong starting point.

By allocating 60% of annual ad spend to Impactful channels, you give Opportunistic channels a stronger foundation for highly targeted campaigns.

When to break The 60-40 Rule

Apply The 60-40 Rule to your annual ad spend.

Individual campaigns and event promotions may lean more heavily toward either bucket based on the objective.

SCENARIO ONE

Blockbuster holiday event campaign

Let's say your attraction hosts the area's can't-miss event of the year. The event is a major opportunity to introduce the attraction to new audiences.

Allocate roughly 80% of the campaign budget to Impactful media to create excitement and demand.

That may mean leaning more heavily on Opportunistic channels during the rest of the year to drive general admission ticket sales.

SCENARIO TWO

Wedding and private event campaign

An 80% to 100% allocation to Opportunistic channels may make sense when the objective is selling private-event packages.

Following The 60-40 Rule across the annual budget means the attraction has already built awareness, making this more conversion-focused campaign more effective.

Only invest in a media channel if you can allocate at least 5% of the total budget to it.

Don't spread your budget too thin.

One of the most common mistakes we see cultural attraction marketers make is putting too little weight behind too many media channels.

The 5% Rule applies to channels, not tactics.

Channel	% of Budget
TV	45%
Radio	21%
Display	15%
Outdoor	8%
Influencer	4%
Digital Video	2%
Paid Social	2%
Paid Search	2%
Print	1%

Correcting a media mix that breaks The 5% Rule

Notice how this plan allocates less than 5% of the budget to several channels.

We can often improve the effectiveness of the media mix simply by consolidating the number of channels.

Fewer properly funded channels are generally stronger than a long list of underweighted placements.

Invest a minimum of 10% of the budget in paid social video.

10%

MINIMUM
SHARE OF
BUDGET IN
PAID
SOCIAL
VIDEO

Our experience tells us that short-form video ads on platforms like Instagram and TikTok are among the strongest-performing media options for cultural attractions.

Social video combines the strengths of Impactful and Opportunistic media.

It can build excitement while also helping drive ticket sales.

A common challenge for cultural attractions is maintaining a steady flow of video content to support effective advertising.

Consider working with local influencers to create videos about their experience at the attraction or event, then using paid media to amplify the strongest content as ads.

Putting it all together

Here is an example media mix for a cultural attraction's annual budget.

Notice how the budget is split 60-40 between Impactful and Opportunistic channels, and no channel receives less than 5% of the budget.

Media Type	Channel	% of Budget
Impactful 60% of Budget	TV	20%
	Outdoor	20%
	Influencer	10%
	Radio	10%
Opportunistic 40% of Budget	Digital Video	15%
	Paid Social	15%
	Display	5%
	Paid Search	5%

The media plan doesn't have to be complex.

Thanks for reading our Media Planning Guide.

Over the years, I've seen advertisers and agencies try to show how sophisticated their media plans are by throwing the kitchen sink into the mix.

Unfortunately, the client often ends up doing more work to execute a diluted plan that doesn't put enough weight behind the channels that matter most.

I'm passionate about helping cultural attractions invest their marketing dollars effectively.

Your community contributes to those funds through tax dollars, admission, memberships, and donations.

Spending them wisely is a responsibility. The media universe has become incredibly complex. That doesn't mean the media plan has to be.

I hope these rules bring more discipline and clarity to how you build your next media plan.

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We help cultural attractions drive attendance through paid media.

Attend is an advertising agency that serves zoos, aquariums, gardens, and museums.

We specialize in:

Advertising Strategy

Develop the advertising strategy that guides your budget, media investments, and creative decisions.

Media Planning and Buying

Plan and buy TV, radio, outdoor, programmatic, search, and paid social campaigns designed to increase visitation and revenue.

Influencer Marketing

Build creator partnerships that produce authentic content and turn it into a scalable advertising asset.

Digital Advertising Reset

Connect ticketing systems like ACME and Tessitura to Meta, Google, and TikTok, then rebuild your ad accounts so your team owns the data, campaigns, and performance history.

Google Ad Grant Management

Maximize your \$10,000 monthly Google Ad Grant with strategy, management, and ongoing optimization.

Learn more on our website: attend.media