



# Advertising's 3 Major Consumer Insights Challenges



Advertising has come a long way since the Mad Men “Golden Age”— a time with low competition, incredible reach, and a singularly focused consumer.



Today, advertisers have it tough. Despite consumers being glued to their smartphones at astronomical rates, [upwards of 5 to 6 hours for Americans](#), reaching them is harder than ever.

A large part of today’s advertising woes centers around consumer insights. Privacy concerns and regulation shifts have made accurate data less accessible. Combine that with short attention spans and rapidly evolving consumption habits, and it’s easy to see how much work advertisers have cut out for them today.

## Challenge #1: Complexity

Consumer insights used to have a much longer shelf life than they do today. It could take weeks to months to gain access to them, and that was ok. Change was slower, so they were still relevant. That’s no longer the case today.

In today’s world, you need nearly instant insights if you want to create meaningful engagements with your audience. And that’s largely due to the fact that we live in a world of instant gratification. Algorithms used by social media giants like TikTok and Meta have conditioned consumers to expect [hyper-personalized content in real-time](#).

But unless you’re a major social media app, real-time consumer insights aren’t easily accessible to advertisers for one major reason:

They’re not engineers.

Today, most BI systems rely heavily on data engineers with coding expertise to access and scrub the consumer data. And since most advertisers aren’t technical enough to tackle this task themselves, they’re at the mercy of these teams to do it—oftentimes waiting weeks to over a month for insights.

Modern day consumers demand real-time engagement. But the complexity of accessing consumer insights is hindering advertisers’ ability to accomplish this—leaving substantial money and opportunity on the table.

## Challenge #2: Privacy

Accessing data is the first pain-point. The second? Obtaining decent consumer insights to begin with.

Consumers have grown weary when it comes to sharing their data—and rightfully so. They've been burned by data breaches and spammy marketing tactics.

Combine consumer reluctance to share with [expanding regulations](#) (GDPR, CCPA) and the [phasing out of third-party cookies](#) and it equates to more restrictions and less consumer insights.

But there is some headway being made in this area. The rise of privacy-enhancing technologies (PETs) is meant to be a solution for both consumers and advertisers. PETs protect individual privacy in three major ways:



### 1. Federated learning:

also known as collaborative learning, federated learning trains algorithms in a decentralized state without ever exchanging data



### 2. Differential privacy:

using machine learning to analyze consumer data while preserving privacy



### 3. Secure multi-party computation:

the ability for multiple users to extract insights and collaborate on data as it remains fully encrypted

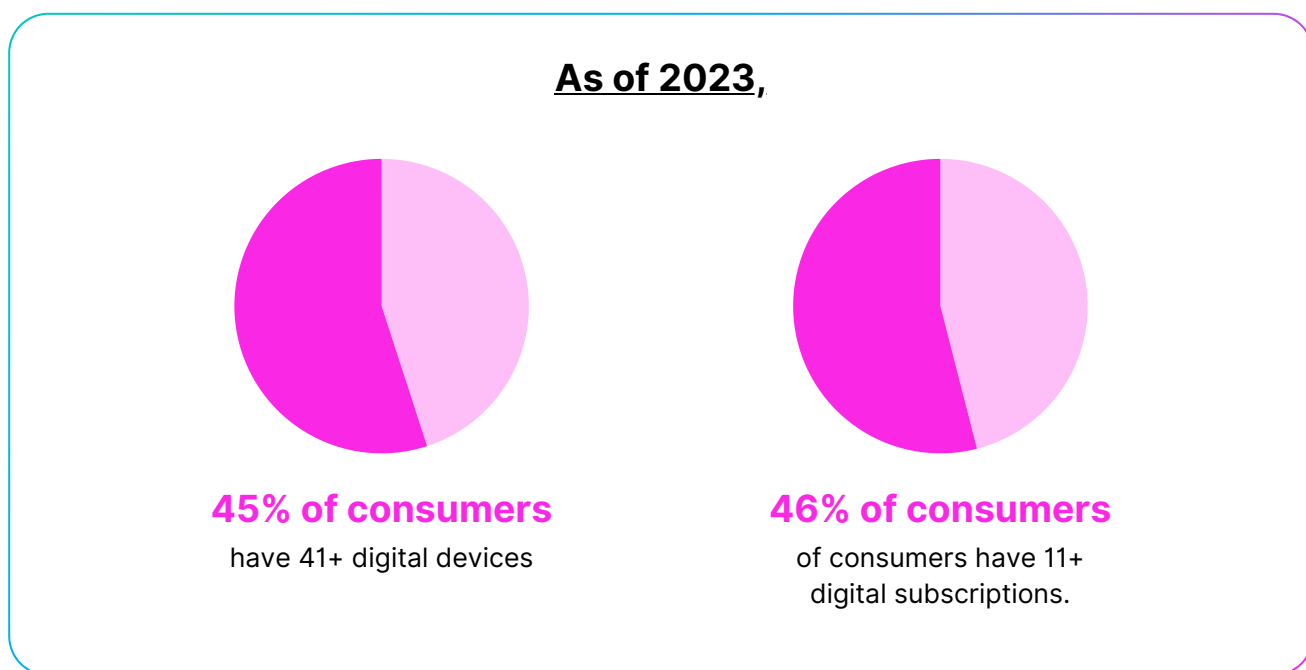
While fantastic for adhering to consumer data privacy and protection, most PETs are highly technical and require heavy lifting from engineers.

In short? Most PET offerings on the market today are not able to be accessed or used by non-technical folks like marketers and advertisers.



## Challenge #3: The Attention Fragmentation Syndrome

The third pivotal advertising challenge of today centers around the attention fragmentation syndrome. We have more digital applications than ever before, and it's not necessarily a good thing.



The more media consumption choices introduced to the market, the more distracted consumers become.

In order to compete and win their attention, you need to truly know your audience—their unique behaviors, interests, and affinities.

But that's not all. You then need to take those deep user insights and combine them with the ability to analyze and react to campaign data in real-time.

The only way to do this is by having a system that democratizes data access and captures in-the-moment insights. But most advertisers don't even know where to begin to look for this type of solution.

**Despite the bleak outlook, it's not all doom and gloom. There are solutions to each of the dilemmas. Let's walk through each one below.**

## Complexity Challenge

The biggest challenge advertisers face today is an age-old problem—timely access to accurate consumer insights.

This is due to a [number of factors](#), but the main reason is that most business intelligence platforms take strong technical skills to navigate.

Since more advertisers aren't very technical, they're left at the mercy of data engineering teams to scrub and organize consumer data, however long that would take.

### Solution: Accessible Insights

Here's the thing—consumers' preferences have shifted. Brands used to control most touchpoints, but today, [consumers are in the driver's seat](#).

Now, more than ever before, consumers decide how and when to engage with brands, across search, social, and other third-party results.

So if you're not where they are when they want to engage with you, you lose.

To solve this data accessibility problem, advertisers need to take control of their data. How? By expanding their tech stack to include UX-friendly consumer insights. Doing so will empower advertisers to:



Know their audience—behavior, preferences, and affinities.



Create hyper-personalized campaigns.



Get [in-the-moment audience insights](#) and adjust campaigns accordingly.



Never miss an opportunity to drive powerful connections.

Knowing your audience is half the battle, making meaningful connections with them in real-time is the other half. Gaining access to [holistic, real-time consumer data](#) is the only path forward.

## Privacy

On top of the complexity of obtaining accurate consumer insights, access to high-quality consumer data is difficult because of [expanding regulations](#) and [cookie restrictions](#). Not to mention consumers' hesitance to even share their information after countless data breaches.

[The solution we discussed](#) was privacy-enhancing technologies (PETs). PETs protect individual privacy through federated learning, differential privacy, and secure multi-party computation.

## Solution: AI

Today, most PETs require advanced technical knowledge to access. But thanks to AI, this is changing. [AI can work within the restraints of PETs](#) and still gain access to invaluable consumer insights.

As advertisers start to gain exposure to the power of PETs, we should see more of a push for data accessibility. PETs need to be user-friendly and accessible to all—not just data engineers.

# The Attention Fragmentation Syndrome

We explored how nearly half of all consumers have over 41 digital devices and how this led to attention fragmentation.

But there's a caveat to this. We've been told for years that consumers have ~8-second attention span and it's getting shorter. That's not entirely true.

As it turns out, consumers have [fantastic attention spans](#) for things that pique their interest. How many of us have been served Netflix's infamous "Are You Still Watching Netflix" prompt?

Attention spans aren't dwindling, advertisers' effectiveness is. It's not entirely your fault. The rapid shift in platform and consumption preferences makes it feel impossible to keep up.

## Solution: Hyper-personalized Ads

The antidote? Creating in-the-moment experiences that capture and keep your audience's attention.

Advertisers need to add a predictive consumer insights platform to their tech stack that enables them to:



Process [consumer data in real-time](#).



Leverage [dynamic audience segmentation](#) for hyper-personalization.



Uses [machine learning](#) to make accurate predictions.



Adjust active campaigns based on real-time insights.

Public perceptions change quickly. Advertisers' abilities to be proactive to these shifts will be the defining factor in whether or not they're successful over the coming years.

## Final Thoughts

The future of advertising is predictive, proactive, and personalized. Target audience personas alone are no longer cutting it. Advertisers need to be able to see the next step their consumers will take, and act accordingly.

Personalized, in-the-moment experiences define today's world. And if you want to compete, you need to gain access to real-time user insights that help you to deliver the relevant experiences your consumers crave.

Waiting weeks to months for consumer insights is no longer a viable option. Advertisers need to take charge of their data by pursuing technology that makes it accessible to all team members—not just technical ones.

Interested to see more on this? Download the white paper, [The Battle for ATTENTION: Will AI Save The Advertising Industry in a Privacy-Driven Economy.](#)

[Download now](#)

## About SCUBA Analytics

SCUBA is the only decentralized data collaboration platform providing in-the-moment decision intelligence and activation without compromising privacy. Global brands like Microsoft, McDonald's, Twitter, and Warner Bros trust SCUBA to gain in-the-moment insights across billions of touchpoints, fueling real-time experiences and growth. Founded by former Facebook executives and led by industry veterans from Kantar, Sonos, and Splunk.

Deployed behind your cloud as a fully managed service, SCUBA's zero-touch deployment and administration eliminates IT dependencies and data engineering bottlenecks, accelerating time-to-value—privacy-by-design architecture positions organizations for long-term data agility and streamlined global data compliance.