

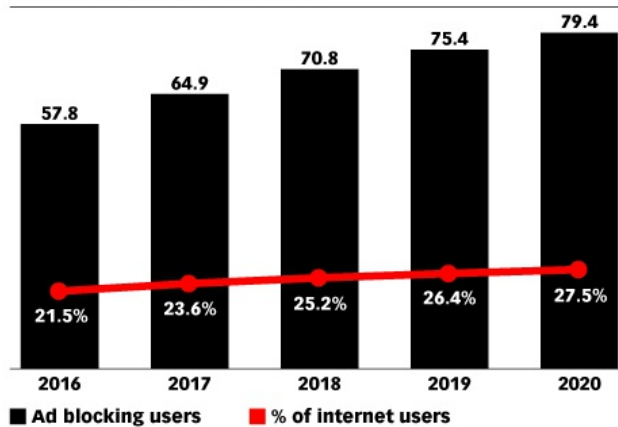
Here's How Brands like KFC Are Combating Ad Blockers

ARTICLE |

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According to our estimates, around **one in four US internet users will use an ad blocker this year**. Rates are still rising, though not as quickly as digital advertisers feared they would.

US Ad Blocking Users and Penetration, 2016-2020
millions and % of internet users



Note: internet users who access the internet at least once per month via any device (including a mobile device) that has an ad blocker enabled
Source: eMarketer, Aug 2018

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“Internet users tend to block ads for a few main reasons—to safeguard their privacy and security and to improve their user experience,” said eMarketer analyst Nicole Perrin in her "**Demanding a Better Ad Experience**" report.

So how are brands responding?

For Steve Kelly, director of media and digital at KFC, it's about acknowledging the distracting nature of digital ads and trying to make the overall experience more enjoyable. "We try to lean in and acknowledge the absurdity of advertising in our content and make the experience more enjoyable," he said. "That may manifest itself in an 8-hour interactive live stream of a room full of kittens playing with a Colonel-shaped cat climber."

Kelly added that KFC's ad content efforts aren't about hard-selling chicken. "We share a break from the daily grind that leaves people feeling better after interacting with our brand," he said.

For vodka brand Absolut, that means giving consumers something they might connect to.

"Consumers are looking for something relatable that offers them some sort of advantage and isn't just blind content being forced on them," said Simon de Beauregard, director at Absolut.

Many brands are also looking to more novel ad channels, like podcasts. According to our estimates, 76.8 million people in the US will listen to a podcast at least monthly in 2019. That equates to more than one-fifth (23.1%) of the US population.

And ad dollars are shifting there. Spending on podcasts is set to increase from \$326 million in 2018 to \$534 million by 2020.

Couch company Burrow uses podcasts as a way to drive awareness and spark conversations around the emerging brand—and convert users who aren't familiar yet.

At the end of the day, though, marketers want to be able to measure ad results and drive conversion rates.

"Our ultimate objective is conversion, but we're also conscious of the fact that for every one click we get, there may be a thousand impressions that we're putting out there into the world," said Stephen Kuhl, CEO and co-founder of Burrow. "Hopefully those impressions are having a positive impact on people."

Kelly, Kuhl and de Beauregard were interviewed as part of eMarketer's

December 2018 report "*Demanding a Better Ad Experience: Why One in Four Internet Users Say No to Ads.*"

eMarketer PRO subscribers can read the full report for more on story advertising. Not sure if your company subscribes? [Check here.](#)