

iab.<sup>UK</sup>

# Future scape

Media Agency Planning Wheel



# Introduction & context

The digital media landscape continues to evolve at pace. Consumers today expect seamless, relevant and measurable experiences across a growing number of platforms, formats and touchpoints.

In this environment, it's more important than ever for agencies to get the very best from their media partners. Stronger responses to briefs don't just lead to better campaigns - they deliver more value to clients and drive long-term success.

That's where this agency planning wheel comes in.

Informed by insights from IAB UK's [Futurescape](#) study, this framework is designed to help you:

- Sharpen the way you brief and assess proposals
- Ask the right questions of media owners
- Push for innovation, accountability and sustainability in every response

Use it to set clearer expectations and raise the bar across your media partnerships.

## Why better brief responses matter more than ever

The way consumers interact with media has changed - and media planning needs to keep up. Agencies' understanding of these shifts is essential to getting the most out of media partnerships.

Here's what's driving change:

- Consumers have changed: They expect personalised, cross-platform experiences that reflect how they live and shop
- The consumer journey is fluid: Audiences no longer follow a linear path; they move across devices, platforms and content types
- Automation and creativity coexist: Clients want both efficient delivery and standout moments that build brand love
- Media is holistic: It's not just about placements, but ecosystems. Media owners must think in terms of content, community, commerce and tech

As media agencies, your role is to challenge media owners to meet this moment - to demonstrate how their solutions reflect today's media realities and tomorrow's opportunities.

# The changing media landscape

# The Media Agency Planning Wheel:

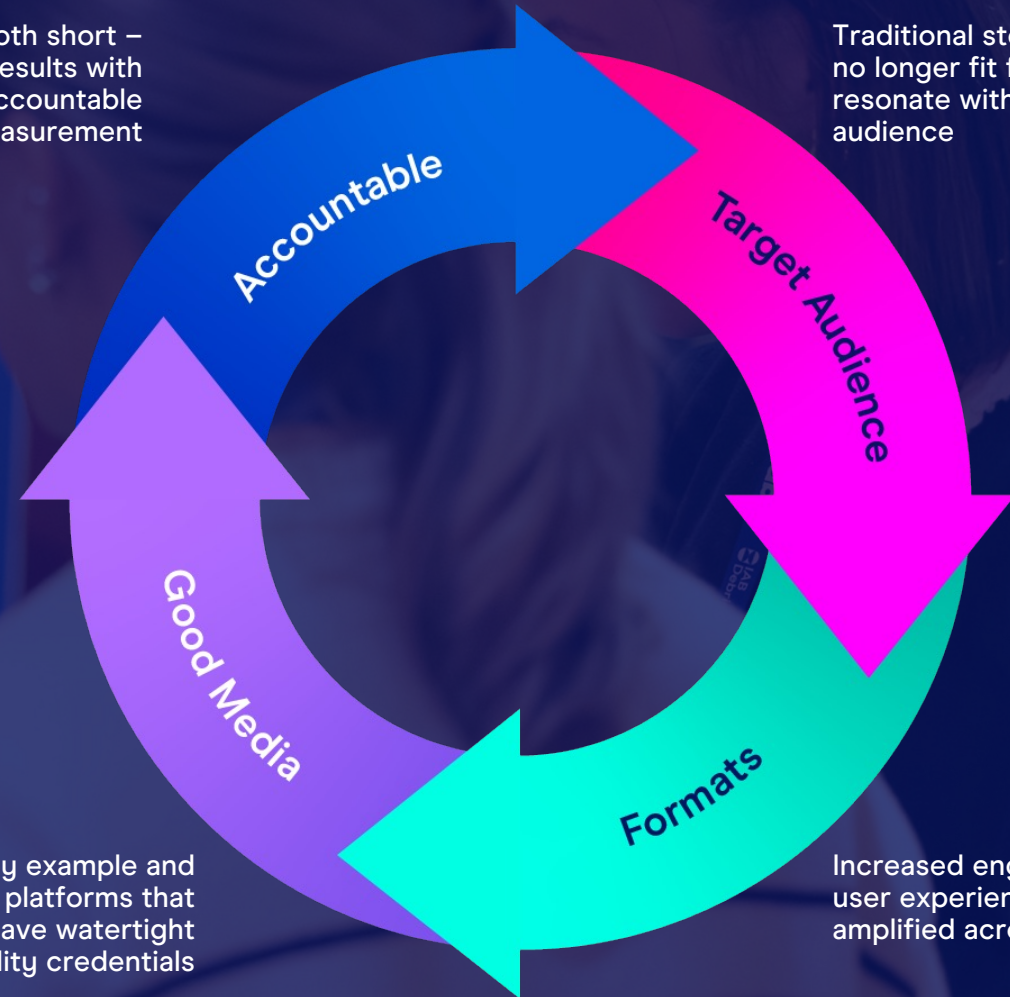
A strategic approach for agencies

This framework has been developed to help media agencies craft more effective, future-facing plans. Grounded in insights from IAB UK's Futurescape, the planning wheel is built around four essential pillars and gives you a clearer path to stronger media plans - by demanding more from your partners.

- Use it as a checklist for reviewing responses
- Share it with your media partners to shape their thinking
- Challenge platforms to go further

Demonstrate both short – and long-term results with robust, accountable measurement

Traditional stereotyping is no longer fit for purpose to resonate with your target audience



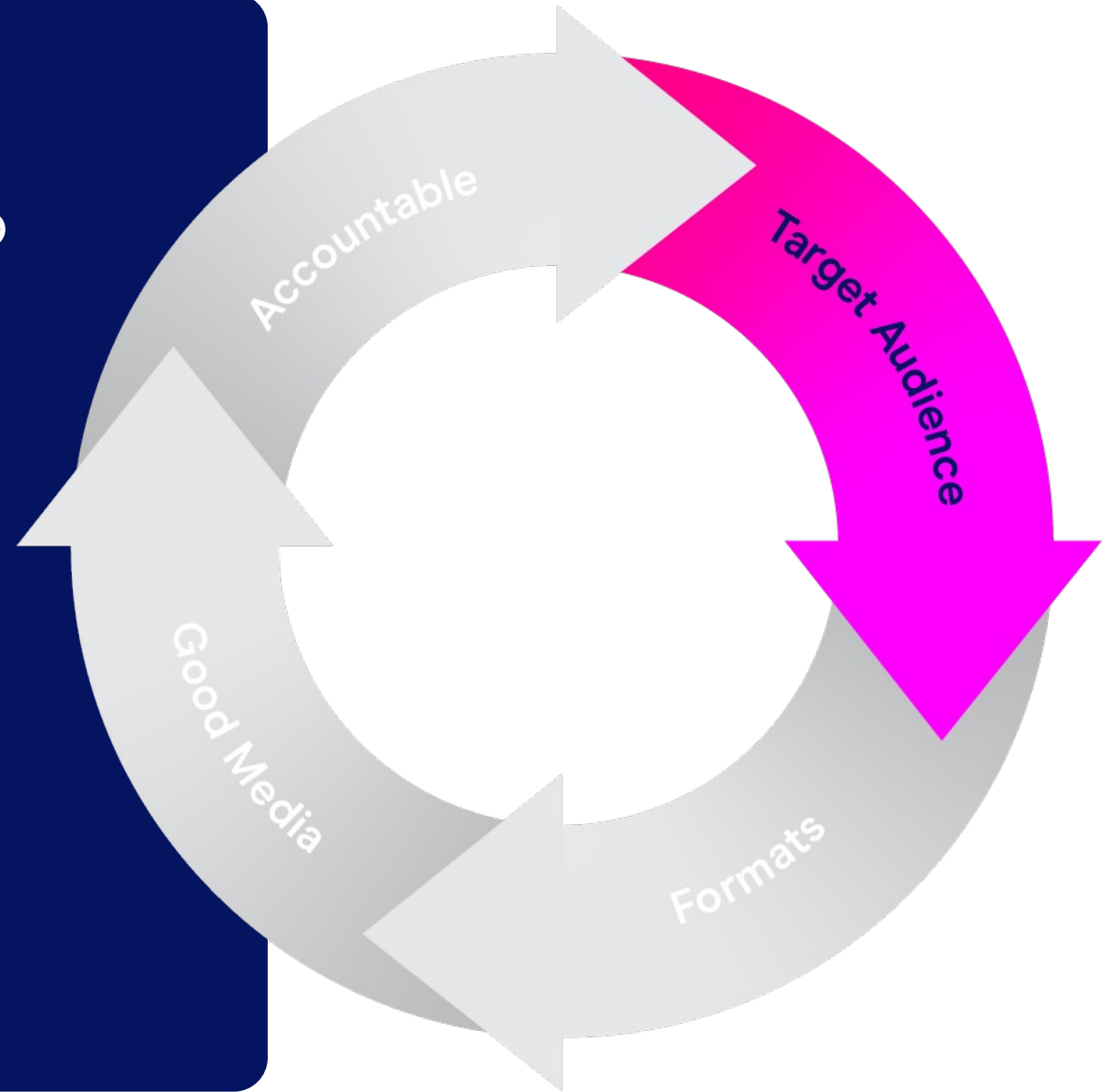
Lead by example and work with platforms that have watertight sustainability credentials

Increased engagement and user experience must be amplified across formats

## Target audience: Moving beyond stereotypes to real connections

Traditional demographic targeting is no longer sufficient. Today's consumers expect to be seen in more nuanced, meaningful ways. To plan effectively, you should:

- Workshop audience understanding with clients: Go beyond age, gender, and location. Use first-party data to uncover how people shop, live, engage and create
- Use AI-powered predictive analytics: Forecast consumer needs based on behavioural and purchase data. Deliver dynamic content that adapts to real-time sentiment, behaviour and location
- Collaborate with immersive tech providers: AR and VR offer deeper brand experiences. For example, allowing consumers to virtually try on products streamlines the journey from awareness to purchase



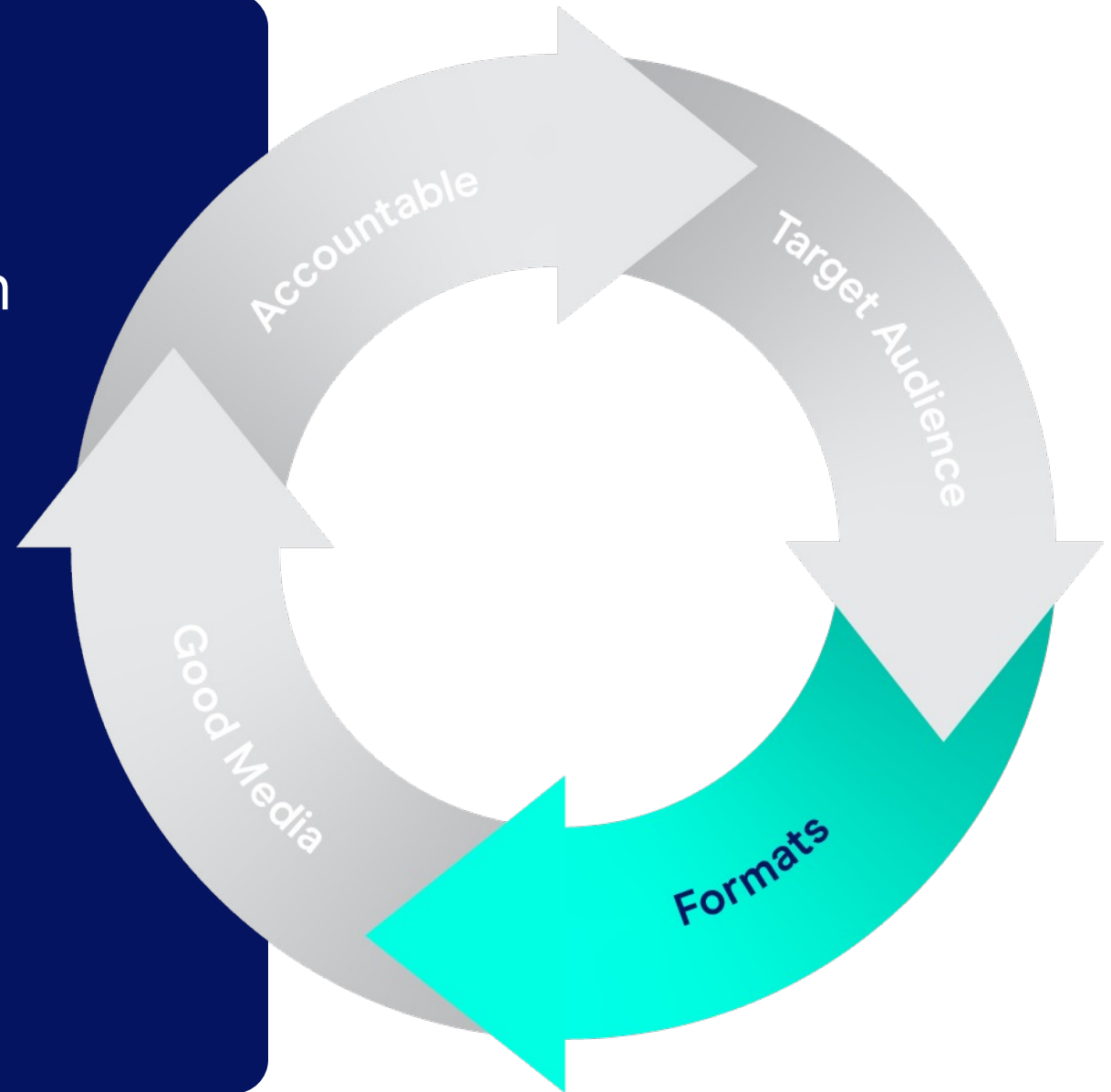


## Formats:

# Driving engagement through smart, multi-platform execution

To elevate engagement and user experience, your format strategy needs to be forward-thinking, audience-first and built for action.

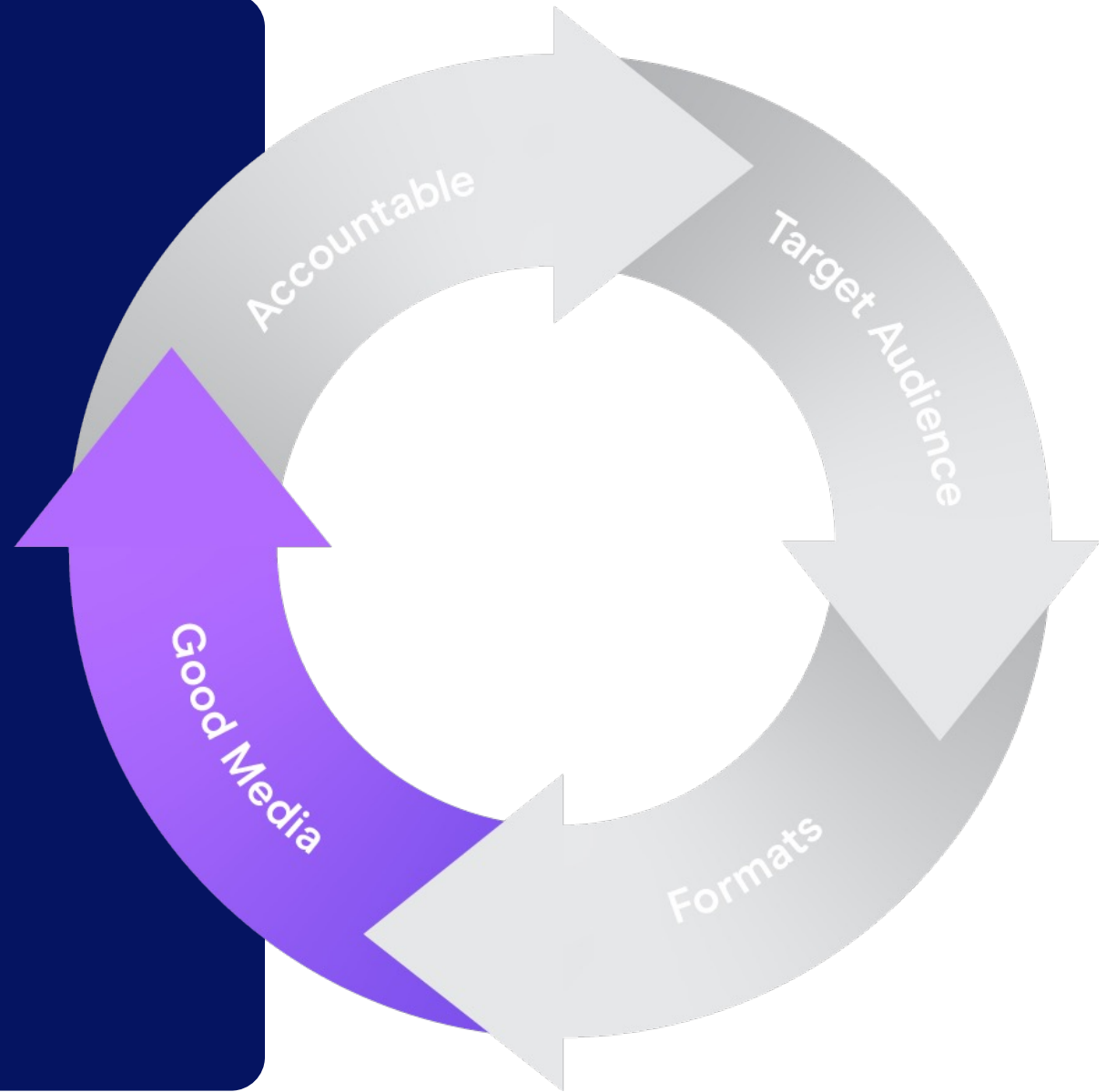
- Lead with video: Use video not just for awareness but also for conversion. Educate clients on the power of shoppable and social video - especially across TikTok, Instagram and emerging platforms
- Use first-party insights to inform content: Share relevant client audience data with platforms (once booked) so they can tailor messaging and optimise for relevance and resonance
- Brief Retail Media Networks as standard: Integrate physical and digital touchpoints, such as in-store screens and smart carts, into your planning to deliver end-to-end measurement and omnichannel impact



## Good media: Prioritise sustainability & responsible media investment

**Sustainability is no longer a nice-to-have – it's a baseline requirement. As an agency, you must champion environmentally responsible and ethical media strategies.**

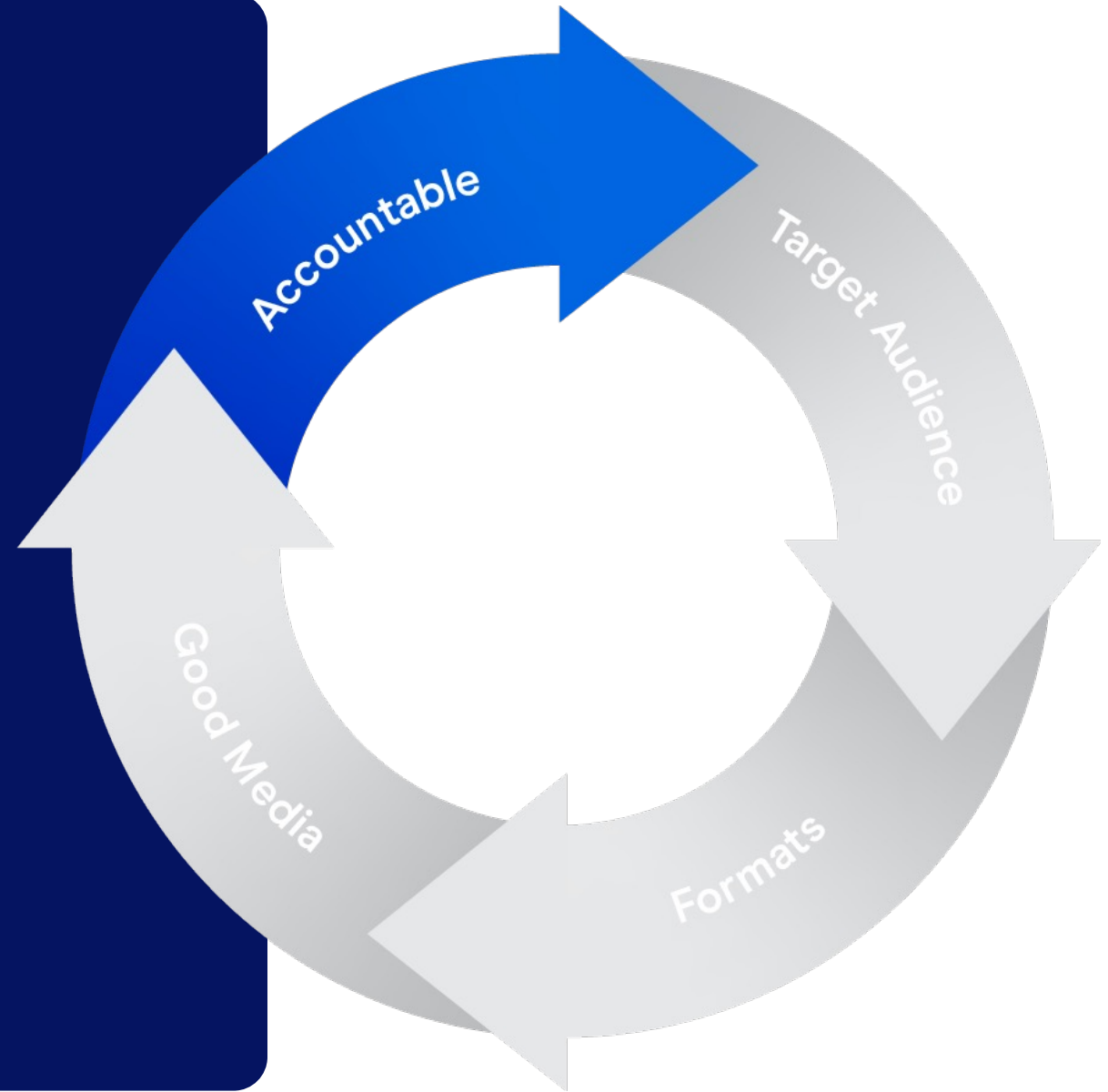
- Only brief media owners with verified sustainability credentials: Look for partners aligned with the Science Based Targets Initiative, B Corp, or Carbon Trust Standard, and who work with carbon measurement partners like Scope3
- Champion low-carbon creative formats: Encourage clients and creative teams to consider format mix, including lower resolution, static-supported video and sustainable production practices
- Be smart with frequency: Monitor campaign delivery and trim excess impressions that don't drive additional value. Less waste means a lower carbon footprint



## Being accountable: Build in measurement from the start

Today's media plans must prove their value. Work with partners that bring robust, transparent and effective measurement solutions to the table.

- Tap into the power of Retail Media Networks: Ensure they respond to briefs with solutions like live shopping - enabling direct commerce through short-form video content
- Include AR providers: Evaluate how media owners plan to integrate AR into their solutions, especially for verticals like fashion and beauty
- Align with creators who deliver commercial outcomes: Work with creators whose content integrates shoppable elements (e.g. YouTube wallpaper ads or embedded links), enabling seamless purchase journeys without interrupting content





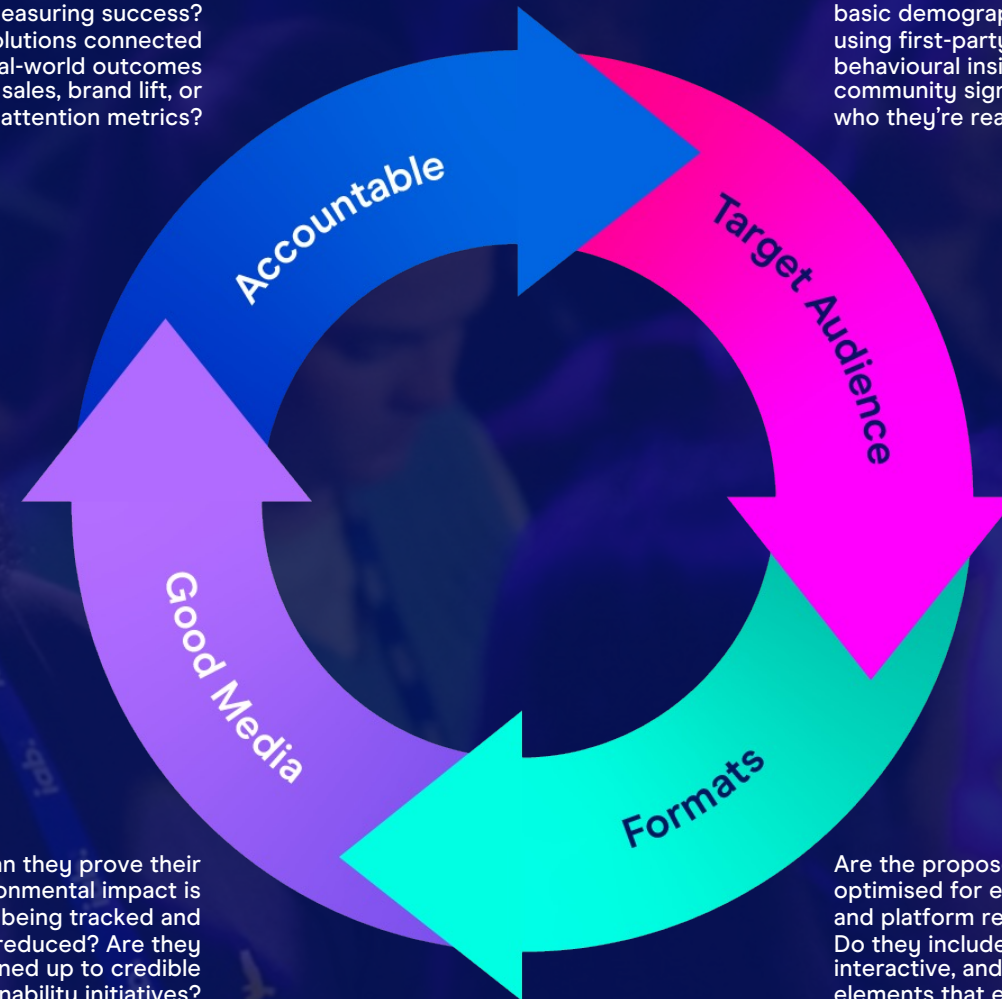
# Bringing it all together: use the planning wheel to get better responses from media owners

This framework isn't just a lens for planning - it's a tool to help you ask smarter, sharper questions of your media partners. When reviewing responses to briefs, ask...

Use this framework as a consistent filter to evaluate proposals and push media owners to raise their game.

Is there a clear plan for measuring success?  
Are solutions connected to real-world outcomes like sales, brand lift, or attention metrics?

Have they moved beyond basic demographics? Are they using first-party data, behavioural insights, and community signals to define who they're reaching?





# Call to action

## Get the responses you deserve

The Media Agency Planning Wheel gives you a clearer path to stronger media plans - by demanding more from your partners.

- Use it as a checklist for reviewing responses
- Share it with your media partners to shape their thinking
- Challenge platforms to go further

## Want support embedding the framework into your briefing process?

Speak to IAB UK – we're here to help you unlock smarter, future-proof solutions. Contact [insight@iabuk.com](mailto:insight@iabuk.com)