

1. What is Audiences by Skimlinks?

Audiences by Skimlinks helps publishers earn even more for the role their content plays in creating purchase intent.

Audiences by Skimlinks is a programmatic audience targeting service for advertisers that automatically shares revenues with publisher partners based on their contribution to the Skimlinks' data cooperative. Publishers will also gain access to free audience insights, helping them understand the shopping behaviors of their readers to inform their content creation strategies, grow their readership, attract new advertiser partnerships and optimize ad yields.

2. Wait, what does all this technical stuff actually mean? Can you explain it in simpler terms?

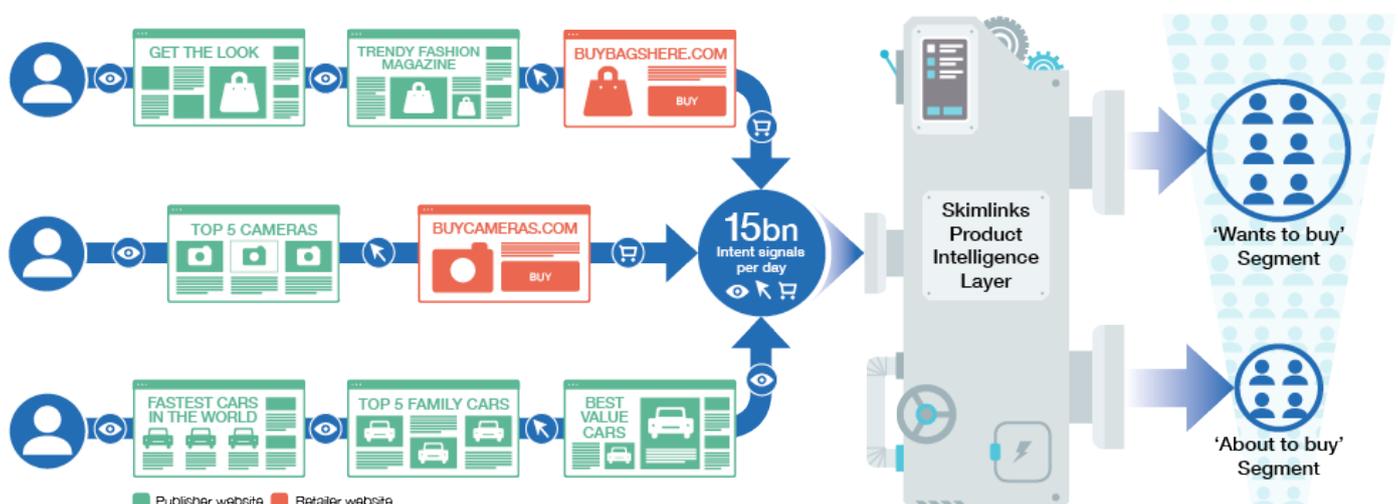
Skimlinks has discovered a way to make publishers more money from the way users are interacting and engaging with the content they create. We gather anonymised data across our network. We add our own intelligence to it to create targetable audience segments. Advertisers can pay to target the (still anonymous) user segments. And we pay publishers a share of the revenue earned.

3. As a publisher, how do I participate in Audiences?

Skimlinks automatically shares data revenues with all its publisher partners based on their contribution to the cooperative, without any complex set-ups or data management processes. As a member of our publisher network, you already have access to the data cooperative so you don't need to do anything to take part, and can start benefiting from data revenues straight away.

4. How does Audiences by Skimlinks work?

Skimlinks captures 15 billion shopping intent signals from across its network of 1.5 million publisher domains on a daily basis. We apply machine learning to this colossal amount of data, enriched by our product intelligence layer - which understands the taxonomy and metadata of 100 million product references and links - to build high-converting audience segments based on the products and brands that users are likely to purchase. Agencies and brands can access these segments via a number of programmatic platforms to run more effective display, social and video campaigns.



The patterns we identify are observed across multiple publishers and merchants

The depth and breadth of data and patterns observed across the network allows Skimlinks to more accurately predict purchase behaviors. For example, the combination of one user visiting ten pages across five different websites might be the pattern our machine learning algorithms determine indicates an interest in buying a high-end handbag in the next week.

Our audiences do not exist in the raw data of any single publisher

We have a rule of 50. Which means that segments can only be created where data is sourced from at least 50 publisher websites. This means that, on average, any one publisher contributes less than 2% of the signal information needed to classify a user.

We classify each user according to 20,000 attributes. These attributes are created by a process called 'machine learning'. Machine learning is where powerful clusters of computers read through petabytes of information to discover patterns and important combinations. Each user is scored 0-1000 based on the likelihood of having each of the attributes.

It is this processing that makes Audiences by Skimlinks different from other publisher data management platforms. We combine signals from the entire retail ecosystem to identify patterns not visible when looking at a single website. Even the largest websites in the world do not have enough information to make accurate conclusions about the browsing and shopping behaviors of all their users.

5. Does this mean you'll add or inject anything into my site?

No. We will not inject anything into your content or ad units. This will have zero impact on your site. The patterns of behavior generated as your users read and engage with the commerce-related content you write - when aggregated with similar data from the other 1.5 million sites that work with Skimlinks - help us predict shopping behaviors, and advertisers will pay to target users with ads based on these predictions. We will collect this money from advertisers - as we do with the affiliate commissions we already collect for you - and pay you monthly based on your site's contribution to the segments sold that month. You don't have to do anything differently, nor will this have any impact on your site or users' experience.

6. So where are the targeted ads shown, if not on my site?

The way the programmatic ad buying process works is that advertisers bid to buy ad space on publishers' sites using real-time bidding platforms. They use audience data to make this bidding process more accurate and targeted. By helping advertisers with Audiences by Skimlinks, advertisers will be able to target their ads to people with a high likelihood to buy something. Sometimes this will mean the advertiser buys inventory on your site (if you have made it available to the real-time bidding exchanges), other times it will mean the advertiser buys inventory on another site, but you will still get paid for it if you contributed any intent signals to the calculation that predicted which users would be in that segment.

7. Can I opt out of Audiences and still use Skimlinks' Affiliate service?

Yes. You can opt out of Audiences via your account settings in the Publisher Hub at any time. By choosing not to participate in Audiences, you are opting out of contributing to audience segments as well

as the potential to earn revenue from this service and free access to audience insights. It will not affect your usage of the Skimlinks service. Opt-out takes approximately 24 hours to be effective.

8. Can I opt back in to Audiences by Skimlinks?

Yes. You can opt in again at any time via the account settings in the Publisher Hub or by letting us know directly. Participating in Audiences by Skimlinks provides you with the opportunity to earn incremental revenues from this service without any changes to your implementation or site.

9. What if I've implemented Skimlinks via the Link API?

Intent signals from the Link API are not currently included in the creation of audience segments. Publisher partners who use Skimlinks exclusively via the Link API are not currently eligible to contribute to or earn from Audiences by Skimlinks. We will inform you when this changes.

10. Am I risking my visitors' privacy by participating?

Absolutely not! We are acutely aware of users' feelings about being 'stalked' online. In fact, one of the main reasons behind the creation of our Audiences technology was to reduce advertiser reliance on stalky, overly simplistic advertising solutions.

Our goal for our advertiser partners is to help them find people who are in the early stages of product research and discovery. We want the advertising targeted to these users to be useful, well-timed and welcomed.

You can find out more about how Skimlinks operates through Skimlinks-enabled sites and how information about users is obtained and used by Skimlinks in our Privacy Policy: <http://skimlinks.com/privacy-policy>

11. You're selling data to advertisers?

No. We do not sell raw data to advertisers. We create unique audience segments that retailers and brands can use to target ad campaigns. At no stage does an advertiser know anything about an individual, or anything about data from a specific publisher. All data is anonymized and aggregated.

12. You're selling audiences to advertisers?

We are selling the ability to target groups of anonymized users based on their browsing and shopping behaviors and preferences. For example, an advertiser might want to target people interested in buying new sunglasses. We can create an audience segment of these types of people for the advertiser to target as part of a programmatic ad campaign. We collect payment from advertisers for this service. We then share the proceeds with publishers who contributed to the creation of that audience segment.

13. How much will I get paid for my data? What is it worth?

The worldwide data market is valued by some to be \$1bn per year and is growing quickly as more advertising spend goes online and is spent programmatically. This includes all sorts of data used in niche areas like social media and search advertising. It is impossible to predict ahead of time exactly how much an individual publisher can make, but we anticipate for many publishers it will exceed what they earn from Skimlinks for link affiliatization.

Skimlinks will distribute revenue between publishers based on their relative contribution of intent signals used to create each audience segment. A heavier weighting will be given to sites that generate more direct intent signals (clicks and purchases) for a particular audience. What this means is that even small publishers in niche areas have potential to earn more revenue since the algorithm rewards sites and pages that produce the strongest signals of purchase interest and intent.

14. How will revenue be reported? Separate to my affiliate income?

There is a new area within the Publisher Hub that will display your monthly income from Audiences by Skimlinks.

Estimated Audiences revenues will be reported in the Publisher Hub the month after the revenue is earned, and this amount will be confirmed the following month. The reason these amounts may vary is that agencies and trading desks are not always timely with their own reporting to us.

Very soon we will also offer richer insights about your users' shopping behaviors across our network in the Publisher Hub.

15. When will revenue be reported?

The way audience data transactions are reported is very different from affiliates; the industry is quite a long way from 'real-time', with reporting aggregated monthly across platforms, then audited and verified. In the beginning we expect to release updates monthly. The aggregation of this data will be coming from several hundred sources, and in some markets, reports will need to be created by hand.

We are planning to release the first version of numbers around the end of the month following the month of transactions. For example, we aim to publish January revenue data at the end of February. During this time, it is still possible that the total amount may fluctuate due to partner delays or further verification requirements. We expect final monthly revenues to be reported around 90 days after month close.

16. Is there a risk of cannibalization of my display revenues?

Absolutely not. Because we cap the amount of data we include from any one publisher into any segment, and because we don't disclose the publisher names that are contributing to any segment, the possibility of cannibalization is eliminated. In fact, the opposite is more often the case: when advertisers use Audiences on a programmatic campaign, it tends to result in more impressions being bought from Skimlinks Publishers than if they bought ads randomly. The reason is pretty straightforward; there is a naturally higher overlap between users in Skimlinks Audiences and users visiting Skimlinks Publishers, than with Audiences and the rest of the Internet.

17. Can I limit who you sell my data to?

No, but as we are going to market as a premium data provider, it will naturally self-select high quality buyers. We know how valuable this data is, and we are passionate about ensuring maximum value and revenues to publishers, so Audiences is appropriately priced. Skimlinks will be selling access to Audiences to reputable advertising agencies and their clients. Skimlinks obliges advertisers to meet the local market criteria for compliance.

18. Can you provide reports of which advertisers use Audiences by Skimlinks?

We can provide overviews of the advertisers buying our audience segments where possible. Not all platforms allow for this information to be shared back, and very few allow for real-time sharing of this information. Over time we expect this to improve as the data market matures.

19. Will I need to add anything to my site to enable Audiences?

No. One of the benefits of working with Skimlinks is that you don't need to do anything differently. If you are opted-in to Audiences by Skimlinks, we will automatically include you in the data cooperative from that point forward.

20. Will Audiences change how Skimlinks.js works on my site?

In order for Audiences to work effectively, we need to have a common anonymized identifier of users across our network and with our platform partners such as AppNexus, Oracle, Lotame, Google and others. To do this, we perform a 'cookie sync', which is a process that matches our identifiers with our partners' identifiers via our Javascript. We have architected this to be as light as possible to minimize latency, rotating between partners and only to un-cooked users.

21. What if I have more questions?

We're happy to help! Please contact us on audiences@skimlinks.com and we'll get back to you shortly.