# Accenture Song aims to disrupt advertising with future-focused strategies under Ndidi Oteh



Ndidi Oteh, the newly appointed global CEO of Accenture Song, recently spoke about the agency’s evolving position in the advertising industry, its strategic approach to media buying, and how it contends with major holding companies. In her first UK interview at Campaign Live in London, Oteh acknowledged the complexity of Accenture Song’s place in the market, describing its competitors as “everyone and no one” rather than aligning with the traditional "Big Four" agency model. This nuanced stance came amid speculation about whether Accenture Song could emerge as a fourth powerhouse alongside giants such as WPP, Publicis, Omnicom, and Interpublic, particularly following big mergers like Omnicom's planned acquisition of IPG.

Accenture Song reported revenues of $20 billion (£15 billion) for the 12 months ending in August, reflecting an 8% increase year on year. This places it close to the revenue levels of Omnicom ($16 billion), Publicis (€16 billion/$19 billion), and WPP (£15 billion/$20 billion), according to 2024 headline figures. The agency has recently participated in competitive pitches alongside these groups, such as the four-way contest for Jaguar Land Rover’s global integrated marketing account. Despite this, Oteh conceded that Accenture Song’s media operations remain relatively small compared to the established holding companies. She highlighted strategic moves including winning Optus’ media account in Australia and appointing Dimitri Maex from IPG Mediabrands to lead its global marketing practice, signaling a cautious yet deliberate expansion into media buying.

Oteh anticipates significant disruption in the media planning and buying landscape driven by artificial intelligence and other technological changes. She foresees the existing models being obsolete within two years and stressed that Accenture Song is preparing for the future by focusing on building, borrowing, partnering, and acquiring capabilities aligned with next-generation media strategies rather than replicating legacy approaches. Although she declined to reveal specifics, Oteh’s comments suggest a forward-thinking mindset prioritizing innovation and adaptability.

The growth trajectory of Accenture Song has been significantly fuelled by numerous smaller acquisitions over the past decade, an approach Oteh plans to continue but with an emphasis on strategic partnerships rather than large-scale takeovers. She noted that Accenture's acquisition philosophy revolves around augmenting talent through hiring and upskilling, complemented by partnering with technology companies such as Meta and Salesforce. This hybrid strategy aims to avoid the pitfalls of attempting to own every capability internally.

In discussing Accenture Song’s origins and evolution, Oteh pointed to key UK acquisitions like Fjord in 2013 and Karmarama in 2016 as pivotal moments that helped shape the agency’s early development and introduced essential design and creative capabilities. She stressed the dual identity of Accenture Song as both distinct from and influential on its parent company, Accenture. Having previously worked in Accenture’s main consulting business, Oteh highlighted how Fjord’s acquisition brought design thinking into the wider organisation, catalysing change well beyond the agency division.

Accenture Song now contributes roughly a quarter of Accenture’s overall revenues and is seen as a key driver of transformation within the broader company. Oteh envisages the boundaries between Accenture Song and the rest of Accenture becoming more integrated over time, driven by Song’s leadership in innovation and client impact. She anticipates the development of new capabilities and a shift in focus areas, enabling the agency to execute larger and more complex projects than previously possible.

Despite a strong growth year marked by an 8% revenue increase, Oteh acknowledged challenges in clearly communicating Accenture Song’s market positioning. She underscored the agency’s unique ability to integrate creative, advisory, commerce, design, digital products, and customer service across the entire customer journey. This holistic approach aims to drive “realised, durable impact” beyond traditional brand-building, aligning with evolving client expectations for personalised yet harmonised customer experiences rather than uniformity across channels.

On the diversity and talent front, Accenture Song has faced scrutiny following Transport for London's decision to exclude the agency from a creative review after Accenture's parent firm dropped global diversity and inclusion targets. Oteh reaffirmed the company’s commitment to diversity as central to its identity and strategy, highlighting the importance of a varied workforce to deliver on the promise of being an “industry of one” that is both local and global. She described the current labour market as rich in talent, presenting an opportunity to build a culture of “shape shifters” ready to innovate and create the future.

Industry data corroborates the competitive environment Accenture Song faces. In the broader advertising sector, Publicis Groupe, which recently surpassed WPP as the world’s largest ad group by market capitalization, reported a robust 2024 with forecasted organic growth slowing to 4-5% in 2025. CEO Arthur Sadoun emphasised investments in AI, technology, and data capabilities, including targeted acquisitions primarily focused on proprietary data and tech innovation totaling 800-900 million euros. Publicis’ rise underscores the dynamic shifts in the industry, accelerated by ongoing mergers and technological adoption.

Meanwhile, WPP has reported a 1% decline in organic revenue for 2024, hindered by weaker client spending in key markets including North America and China. The group continues to face intense competition from rivals Omnicom and Interpublic, who are currently merging in a $13.25 billion deal to fortify their market position amid growing pressure from Big Tech companies and AI-driven disruption. The merged Omnicom-Interpublic entity, expected to close by mid-2025, will command over $25 billion in revenues and aims to deliver significant cost savings while countering shifts in advertising spend.

Omnicom’s own recent financial performance shows strength, with third-quarter revenue surpassing forecasts, driven by increased advertising spending ahead of major events like the U.S. presidential election. This momentum contrasts with the broader industry’s mixed outlook, illustrating the varying impacts of economic and technological changes across the global advertising landscape.

In summary, Accenture Song under Ndidi Oteh is positioning itself as a transformative force within the advertising sector, leveraging technology, partnerships, and a wide-ranging suite of capabilities to challenge traditional agency hierarchies. While still expanding its footprint in media buying, the company’s strategic focus is on future-ready growth through innovation and collaboration rather than replicating legacy agency models. This approach reflects broader industry trends marked by consolidation, AI-driven change, and the increasing blending of consulting and marketing services.

### 📌 Reference Map:

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.campaignasia.com/article/song-is-changing-accenture-ceo-ndidi-oteh-on-media-ma-and-big-four-agency/505045> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.idnfinancials.com/news/57546/accenture-song-scores-us20-bn-set-to-dominate-global-agency-market> - Accenture Song, the advertising division of Accenture, reported an 8% increase in revenue, reaching US$20 billion in the 2025 fiscal year. This growth was driven by rising demand for generative artificial intelligence (AI) services. Despite this achievement, Accenture Song's revenue growth in the fourth quarter showed a slowdown compared to previous years, indicating a mid single-digit growth rate. This performance positions Accenture Song among the top players in the global advertising industry, rivaling traditional agency giants such as WPP, Publicis Groupe, and Omnicom Group.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/publicis-forecasts-slower-2025-remains-confident-outperformance-2025-02-04/> - Publicis Groupe, the world's largest advertising group by market capitalization, anticipates a marginally slower organic growth of 4% to 5% in 2025, following a robust 5.8% growth in 2024 driven by data-driven targeted marketing. Despite the expected slowdown, the company remains confident in outperforming the market. Publicis achieved net revenues of 13.97 billion euros in 2024, surpassing their 5.5% growth guidance. Significant industry shifts include the merger of Omnicom and Interpublic, reducing the "Big Four" to the "Big Three" in advertising. CEO Arthur Sadoun emphasized investments in data, technology, and AI, including a dedicated CoreAI entity and partnerships with leading AI firms. The company plans to allocate 800-900 million euros for targeted acquisitions in 2025, focusing on technology and proprietary data. Strategic acquisitions have significantly contributed to their growth, and Publicis projects maintaining an operating margin above 18% with free cash flow between 1.9 to 2.0 billion euros. The proposed dividend is 3.60 euros per share, a 5.9% increase from the previous year.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/wpps-organic-revenue-drops-1-after-weak-final-quarter-2025-02-27/> - WPP, a British advertising group, reported a worse-than-expected 1% decline in full-year organic revenue due to a disappointing final quarter influenced by weaker client discretionary spending in North America, China, and its home market. Despite this decline, WPP's headline operating profit rose 2% on a like-for-like basis to £1.71 billion, meeting market expectations. The company has lost its status as the largest ad group to French rival Publicis and lags behind U.S. competitors Omnicom and Interpublic, which are merging in a $13.25 billion deal. Analysts had predicted a 0.4% organic revenue decline. WPP projects 2025 organic revenue to range between flat and down 2%, expecting improved performance in the latter half of the year. CEO Mark Read expressed cautious confidence in achieving medium-term targets through innovation, simplification, and operational excellence, aiming to enhance shareholder value.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/business/snoop-dogg-helps-publicis-claim-worlds-largest-ad-group-title-2024-12-04/> - Publicis, a French multinational advertising and public relations company, has surpassed British rival WPP to become the world's largest ad group in 2024. Celebrating this achievement, Publicis enlisted American rapper Snoop Dogg, who became a breakout star at the Paris Olympics, to join their annual "The Wishes" video message. Snoop Dogg's prominent presence at the Olympics as a special correspondent for NBC, along with Publicis' growth, was highlighted by Chairman and CEO Arthur Sadoun. Publicis' significant growth was primarily driven by its Epsilon Unit's targeted ad capabilities and extensive consumer behavior data. For the first nine months of 2024, Publicis reported a net revenue of 10.11 billion euros, outpacing WPP’s equivalent revenue. Analysts project Publicis' full-year revenue to reach 13.9 billion euros, while WPP is forecasted at 13.7 billion euros.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/deals/omnicom-interpublic-nearing-merger-wsj-reports-2024-12-08/> - Omnicom Group has announced a $13.25 billion all-stock deal to acquire Interpublic Group, forming the largest advertising agency globally. This merger aims to enhance competition against Big Tech amidst increasing AI usage. Interpublic's shareholders will receive 0.344 Omnicom shares per share, valued at a 21.6% premium. This move necessitates regulatory approval, with Omnicom confident it won't face significant issues. The combined entity, owning brands like BBDO, McCann, and Mediabrands, will hold over $25 billion in revenue. The merger aims to counteract the ad revenue shift to tech giants like Google and Amazon, and address AI-driven challenges in ad creation. The deal, granting 60.6% ownership to Omnicom shareholders, is expected to conclude by mid-2025, offering $750 million in annual cost savings.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/omnicom-beats-quarterly-results-estimates-strong-growth-ad-segment-2024-10-15/> - Omnicom Group exceeded Wall Street's expectations for its third-quarter profit and revenue, driven by substantial growth in its advertising and media segment. The company's revenue for the quarter ended September 30 was $3.88 billion, surpassing the average analyst estimate of $3.80 billion. This performance was supported by businesses resuming their spending on projects after a period of economic uncertainty and high inflation, as well as increased ad spending ahead of the U.S. presidential election. Omnicom's largest segment by revenue, advertising, and media, reported a 9.4% growth, amounting to $2.08 billion compared to the previous year. The company, which competes with Interpublic Group of Companies and UK's WPP, earned $2.03 per share on an adjusted basis, slightly above the anticipated $2.02 per share. Analysts believe that new business wins will further benefit Omnicom.