AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL ADVERTISING PRACTICES

AANA

iab.
australia

MFA
media federation of australia

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Digital Advertising Practices have been created specifically for advertisers in Australia to facilitate better relationships with agencies, publishers and digital platforms, and to foster shared responsibilities for digital ad spends and outcomes.

The Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA), Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and Media Federation of Australia (MFA) have been working together to build trust and instill confidence in the digital advertising value chain for all participants and, in doing so, optimise its value.

A cross-industry team of advertisers, media agencies and digital publishers, assisted by a broader network of subject matter experts have developed the Australian Digital Advertising Practices. While these Practices have been created with the advertiser in mind, they also serve to educate and inform all players within the digital ecosystem including agencies, publishers and ad tech vendors.

The boards of the AANA, IAB and MFA collectively endorse the Australian Digital Advertising Practices and encourage their use.

We recognise that the pace of technological change will require these practices to be regularly updated to reflect emerging opportunities and issues as they arise.

PRINCIPLES

The following operating principles guide the approach we've taken and the content of the Australian Digital Advertising Practices. They are:

1. CHAMPION THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE
A better user experience will lift key quality metrics and overall campaign effectiveness.

2. EDUCATE TO INSPIRE CHANGE
Through best practice education, communication and a clear understanding of metrics, we seek to inspire change. We cannot force or mandate it.

3. SHARED OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY
All participants in the value chain need to take responsibility for their own knowledge and understanding. Shared ownership and responsibility are imperative.

4. EVERY VALUE CHAIN IS UNIQUE
Each advertiser's needs are different. The approach to improving the value chain needs to be optimised for each advertiser's needs and partner arrangements. The advertiser must be accountable for their individual value chain.

5. FAIR VALUE FOR OUTCOMES DELIVERED.
Value is created through quality and price, therefore, adopting best practices to deliver better outcomes may cost more.

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY   VIEWABILITY   AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY   DATA TRANSPARENCY

WHAT ARE THE AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL ADVERTISING PRACTICES?

We have identified five digital advertising value chain issues that represent the highest areas of concern and greatest lack of understanding within the industry. These are addressed in the four Australian Digital Advertising Practices modules.

While ad fraud and brand safety are separate and significantly important issues, the practices and tools employed to address them are often the same. To avoid duplication, the recommended practices for these concerns have been combined. However, this does not diminish the importance of either.

1. DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY

2. VIEWABILITY

3. AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY

4. DATA TRANSPARENCY

Each module within the Australian Digital Advertising Practices is designed to equip the industry with a checklist of questions and areas to consider so that informed decisions can be made.

This is an important first step in building trust and instilling confidence in the digital advertising value chain. The Practices do not solve all issues, rather, they act as a starting point for advertisers, agencies and digital platforms to resolve how they will operate together.

The modules include links to specialist resources to provide access to deeper knowledge and further detail.

The Australian Digital Advertising Practices should not take more than an hour to read and understand.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL ADVERTISING PRACTICES ARE:

- Designed to inform and educate participants to ask the right questions and make informed decisions.
- Putting the accountability for the solution into the hands of the participants.
- Practical and for everyday use through a checklist approach.
- Flexible to fit individual advertiser or partner needs.
- Available to all.
- Designed for Australia and the way we work.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL ADVERTISING PRACTICES ARE NOT:

- Fixed standards or targets.
- Mandated solutions.
- The same answer for every advertiser or partner.
- International answers trying to address local issues.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

The common goal for all five modules is to create a consistent and educated understanding that enables all parties to make informed decisions.

1. **A HIGH LEVEL OF ADOPTION ACROSS THE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM**

2. **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF BEST PRACTICES**

3. **FAIR VALUE FOR ELEVATED SURETY**

4. **ELEVATED TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN HOW AND WHERE TO INVEST IN THE ECOSYSTEM**

5. **ESTABLISHING A COMMON LANGUAGE ACROSS THE VALUE CHAIN**

6. **ELEVATED ADVERTISER CONTROL AND ACCOUNTABILITY AS A RESULT OF MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS**

7. **A SET OF CLEAR AND PRACTICAL USABLE SOLUTIONS**

8. **KEY STAKEHOLDERS ASKING SMART QUESTIONS**

We will measure success on a regular and quantitative basis against the overall KPI of building trust and instilling confidence in the digital advertising value chain for all participants and optimising its value to the wider industry. Tracking of progress and performance against this will help inform the agenda for further review and continuous improvement of the best practices which the AANA, MFA and IAB commit to doing on at least an annual basis.

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY

THE CHALLENGE

The digital advertising industry has evolved to become a complex ecosystem of ingenious technologies and services. While this enables a variety of advertising outcomes, the industry is awash with terms that many do not fully understand.

These terms describe technology, data and services for which the benefits are unclear leaving advertisers unsure whether they are getting the best value from their digital investments.

For many, there is a fog of confusion which can lead to low confidence. This is also having a negative impact on trust in the industry.

This means we need to cut through the confusion and aid transparency through:
- Make available clear and simple information about the various possible supply chain elements and describe their benefits.
- Demonstrate which supply chain elements are fundamental building blocks (essential to executing a buy) and which are optional.
- Build an understanding of the mix of media to truly drive business outcomes.

WHY IS DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY IMPORTANT?

Unless you are a true expert, the digital advertising landscape can be baffling. It is full of language that is hard to follow as it describes technology, data and services for which the benefits may not be clear.

Every element across the supply chain comes at a cost — technology and data costs, and often resource costs as well. It is important to understand the role of different technologies and services and the value that they can create to ensure the optimal value equation is in place for any set of objectives.

The following checklist, graphic and table have been created to demystify the digital advertising ecosystem.

The tools here offer simple definitions and explanations as well as prompts for designing a digital advertising ecosystem for specific requirements.

THE DIFFERENT DIGITAL ADVERTISING TRADING MODELS

There are a variety of digital advertising models: advertiser in-house; independent trading desks; agency trading desks; and bespoke hybrid models. It is important to understand the pros and cons of these models, interrogate them based on business requirements and be accountable for the type of model ultimately chosen. This must form part of an advertiser's contractual terms with all media partners.

Agency trading desks operate in two ways: disclosed or undisclosed. Disclosed is a commercial model where the underlying costs are outlined while the undisclosed model is based on a single price so that underlying costs (people, data, technology, media, etc.) are not disclosed. This also can be referred to as a "non-disclosed" model. As per the MFA Transparency Framework, advertisers opt-in to undisclosed models via client contracts.

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY CHECKLIST

The purpose of this checklist is to provide a framework for discussion between advertisers, agencies, platforms and publishers around the technology, data and services most appropriate for a range of different buying circumstances or outcomes.

1. **Understand the technology that is currently in place**

If you are buying digital media, you are using ad tech services and you should begin by building an understanding of what is in place.

Work with agency, technology and publishing partners to establish a detailed explanation of each component in the digital value chain. Identify the services as well as the costs and value they provide. Refer to the tables on pages 7 and 8 to check if these are optional requirements.

This knowledge will provide a useful platform for discussion on what changes, if any, may be required to ensure the needs of the business are met.

2. **The value of the digital set-up**

How is each component in the current set-up contributing to the delivery of objectives? Technology, data and services come with costs attached – is the benefit derived paying back ahead of the cost?

For every dollar invested, identify and understand the raw cost of the actual media (e.g. what goes to the publisher) from the optional or additional services purchased (e.g. a data-management platform (DMP) or ad verification service).

3. **Examine and decide on media buying objectives**

To determine the best digital media buying strategy, work with media partners to outline buying objectives. Are you trying to drive awareness of a brand or product or push people to a website? Perhaps you are trying to sell a product online?

Being clear about what you want to achieve will help to design an approach that is suitable.

4. **Programmatic or direct?**

There are two main ways to buy digital media – programmatic or direct.

Programmatic buying involves the use of automated buying and selling technologies, matching advertiser and publisher in real-time.

Direct buying follows a more traditional process where the buyer and seller conduct a negotiation followed by the placement of an insertion order.

The best buying method will be determined by campaign objectives. A combination of the two may be required.

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY

5. **The essential elements**

Certain technology is essential to execute specific types of digital media buys. For example, it is not possible to execute a programmatic buy without a demand-side platform (DSP).

Refer to the tables on pages 7 and 8 to determine the technology required as a base.

6. **Decide what technology is needed (or what could be removed)**

Beyond the base technology, additional technology can be employed to drive more evolved buying outcomes (e.g. enhanced brand safety, viewability, audience targeting, etc.).

Understand the trade-offs that may need to be made when pushing for one outcome over another. For example, pushing hard for high levels of viewability may compromise the ability to drive cost-effective reach.

Everything is a balance. What is the right balance for you?

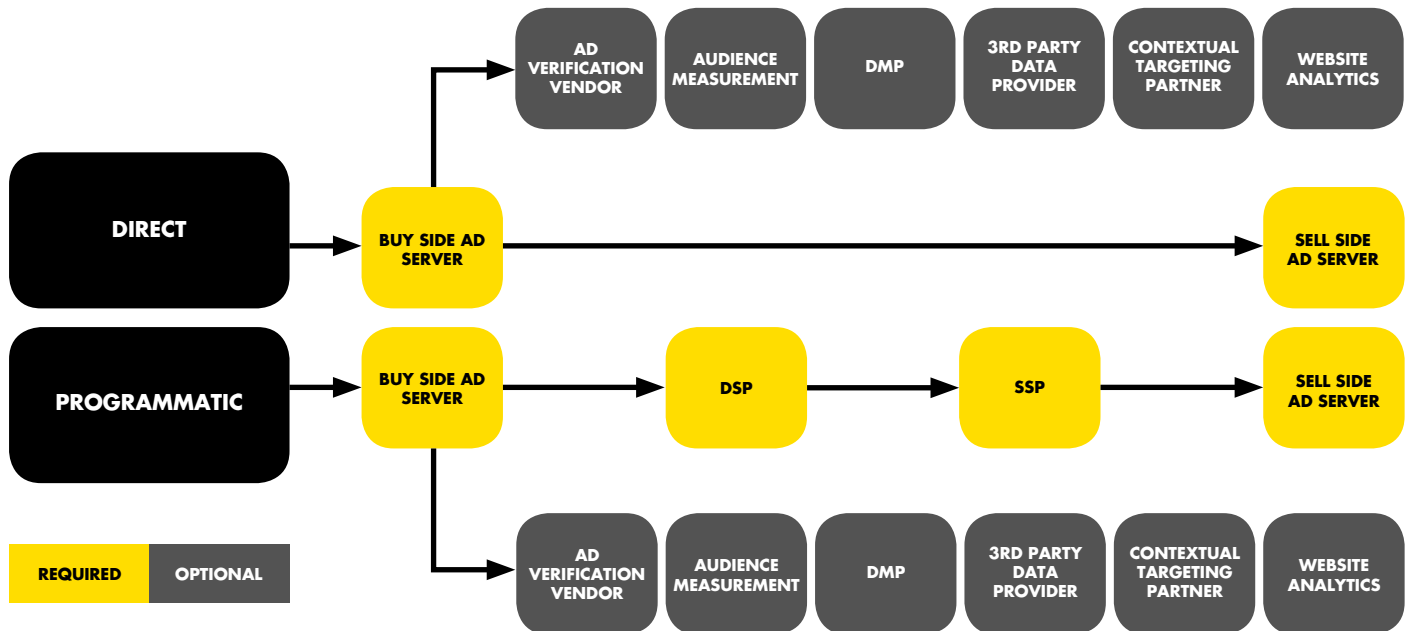**7.** **Choose metrics to track outcomes**

Understand the mix of media that is driving the desired outcome and what is not. To do this, establish a clear set of metrics that cover both branding performance and direct response.

Establish a framework of relevant metrics and also align media with a unified reporting framework to compare metrics across all channels and screens.

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY

KEY TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SERVICES: DIRECT AND PROGRAMMATIC

DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM ELEMENT	SIMPLE DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Buy-Side Ad Server (Third-party Ad Server)	A web-based platform for buyers to host, manage and serve digital assets for advertising campaigns. Its primary goal is to centralise and standardise delivery and performance data with a uniform methodology for counting across key metrics.	Google Marketing Platform (DCM), Sizmek
Audience Measurement	Audience Measurement is best defined as the independent measurement of digital advertising audience delivery across all device types. Audience measurement can refer to the measurement of ads and content/media environments.	Nielsen, Comscore
DMP	A Data Management Platform (DMP) is used to collect, store and manage online and offline data sets to gain insights before creating actionable segments to target digital campaigns.	Salesforce DMP, Lotame, Neustar OneID, Adobe Audience Manager
DSP	A Demand-Side Platform (DSP) handles automated media buying across multiple inventory sources using targeting, data and real-time optimisation. The DSP is designed to buy an audience versus an objective. Its goal is to pay the lowest possible price for inventory. A buyer will use a DSP to access publisher inventory made available via an SSP.	Google Marketing Platform (DBM), The Trade Desk, MediaMath, DataXu
SSP	A Sell-Side Platform (SSP) is utilised by sellers (publishers) to make digital inventory available for DSPs to bid on. The SSP looks to sell inventory for the highest possible price it can, maximising yield for the seller (publisher).	Google Ad Manager (AdX), Rubicon, Appnexus, Telaria, PubMatic
Sell-Side Ad Server (Publisher Ad Server)	A Sell-Side Ad Server is a web-based platform for publishers to store, manage and serve digital assets across digital properties. Its primary functions are to manage the pacing and delivery of advertising campaigns and provide data on campaign performance.	Google Ad Manager (DFP), Appnexus, SAS Intelligent Advertising
Ad Verification Vendors	Ad Verification Vendors offer technology that can give independent data on measurement metrics including viewability, fraud and brand safety.	IAS, Moat, Grapeshot, ComScore
Third-Party Data Providers	Third-Party Data Providers are agents that build audience data sets through partnerships and integrations with external audience collection providers. This data can then be used to target audiences via a DSP or DMP.	Eyeota, Quantium, Lotame
Contextual Targeting Partners	Contextual Targeting Partners offer technology that determines the content of a web page allowing programmatic buyers to deliver contextually targeted ads.	Grapeshot, Peer39
Website Analytics Platforms	Website Analytics Platforms are platforms that track and report on online traffic. These platforms can optimise digital properties and analyse online user behaviour. While they are optional, they are essential to understanding website visitor behaviour.	Google Marketing Platform (Google Analytics), Adobe Analytics

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY   VIEWABILITY   AD FRAUD & BRAND SAFETY   DATA TRANSPARENCY

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY

BUYING OUTCOMES

This table shows the same list of technologies and highlights whether each element plays a role in contributing to a range of additional buying outcomes.

(Y= yes, N= no, P= possibly).

	Buy-Side Ad Server	Audience Measurement	DMP	DSP	SSP	Sell-Side Ad Server	Ad Verification Vendors	Third-Party Data Providers	Contextual Targeting Partners	Website Analytics Platforms
Creative Hosting	Y	N	N	P	N	Y	N	N	N	N
Creative Optimisation	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
Campaign Reporting	Y	Y	N	P	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
Data Management	P	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Audience Targeting Precision	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
Ad Placement Precision	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Brand Safety Measurement	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Viewability Measurement	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Attribution	Y	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	P
Examples	DCM, Sizmek	Nielsen DAR, Comscore	Salesforce DMP, Lotame, Aggregate Knowledge, Adobe Audience Manager	DCM, The Trade Desk, MediaMath, Adobe Adcloud	AdX, Rubicon, Appnexus, Telaria	DFP, Appnexus	IAS, Moat, Grapeshot	Eyeota, Quantium, Lotame	Grapeshot, Peer39	Google Analytics, Adobe Analytics

VIEWABILITY

THE CHALLENGE

Viewability is largely misunderstood and often seen as a media owner or supply-side problem when, in fact, it is an issue for both the buy and sell sides of the advertising equation.

There are ways to improve viewability and best practice, but to do so requires media owners, creative agencies, media agencies and advertisers to work together.

While chasing viewability alone can have an impact on cost, reach and other digital quality metrics, it is still a key quality metric. However, the lack of consistent knowledge and confusion around the subject is an industry-wide problem.

WHY IS VIEWABILITY IMPORTANT?

When assessing digital advertising performance, one of the success measures to use is viewability.

Viewability is defined as:

"The opportunity for digital advertising to be seen by a human within a recognised time frame."

While viewability contributes to the effectiveness of advertising — because an ad cannot be effective if it is not seen — it is not the only, or even always the most important, measure. Bear in mind that just because an ad is seen it doesn't mean it is effective.

WHY ISN'T EVERY AD VIEWABLE?

There are many contributing factors as to whether an ad might or might not be deemed viewable, but most of them relate to humans interacting with an imperfect internet.

Firstly, an ad not being viewable doesn't mean it wasn't served or not seen at all. It could be that the ad didn't load fast enough and/or only part of the ad was seen.

Ad load is important. The heavier an ad is, the slower it loads on the page and the less likely it is to be seen. The longer it takes to load, the greater the likelihood the user has moved on.

Ad file weights have been increasing as more code is 'wrapped' around ads. This code can include creative, interactivity, data integrations, brand safety tags and, ironically, viewability beacons.

There is a trade-off to be made, therefore, between the functionality of an ad and its file weight, which in turn affects viewability.

Another consideration is ad format. The most viewable ad is one that obscures the content and/or makes it difficult for a user to move past or dismiss it. Clearly, though, this is a poor user experience. Ads of this nature encourage ad blocking and have rightly been sanctioned against by the Coalition for Better Advertising.

Another factor is larger ad formats. While they may seem more engaging, the size leads to a greater likelihood a number of pixels will be pushed out of view – especially on mobile – affecting viewability.

It's important to note that a 'non-viewable' ad impression isn't ad fraud; there are many legitimate factors that may be contributing to the issue.

VIEWABILITY

Advertisers, media agencies, creative agencies and media owners need to work together to determine how best to manage and account for viewability according to each campaign's objectives, in balance with engagement and user experience.

HOW IS VIEWABILITY MEASURED?

To measure viewability, independent third-party verification tools such as IAS, MOAT or inbuilt ad-server solutions (e.g. Active View on the Google platform) are required. These technologies enable advertisers to measure whether an ad is in view or not.

The Media Rating Council (MRC) — a U.S. governing body whose purpose is setting valid, reliable and effective measurement standards for the industry — has created viewability standards. The MRC currently defines viewability as 50% of the ad in view for one second for display ads and 50% of the ad in view for two continuous seconds for video.

These standards have been generally adopted as a minimum.

Some agencies and advertisers adopt these standards and others develop their own. For example, an agency may have a standard in place that 100% of the ad needs to be in view for three seconds.

It is worth noting that these standards might change and evolve over time. For instance, there is speculation the MRC will shift its standard to 100% of the ad in view. [1]

The World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) has also released its Global Media Charter that outlines the 'Eight Principles for Partnership' calling for action from both advertisers and organisations across the media value chain in relation to viewability measurement. [2]

It isn't clear at the time of writing when and if the MRC will change the standard and how the WFA Global Media Charter will impact Australia locally, but it is an important context for the subject.

What this means is that it is vital for all parties to stay up to date with key changes both locally and globally that could influence viewability in the Australian ecosystem.

TRADING ON VIEWABILITY?

There is much conversation about trading on viewability. There should be the ability to buy highly viewable ads at a reasonable and mutually agreed standard, yet there are complications with having a blanket approach to viewable trading.

These include:
- Supply and demand pressures inflating costs and reducing reach.
- Creative size and weight impacting load times (and viewability as a by-product).
- Different channels, formats and devices having different viewable benchmarks.
- Viewability optimisation undermining key campaign objectives (e.g. sales, cost per acquisition, brand preference etc.).
- Advertisers and agencies having different standards and approaches.
- Different technologies with different methodologies used in measurement.

For this reason, the Australian Digital Advertising Practices do not aim to dictate policy or to propose benchmarks or regulations. Rather, these materials are designed to highlight the challenges, in more detail.

1. Arvind Hickman, Digital viewability standard could move to 100% pixels in 2018 - MRC, (AdNews, March 2018
2. Global advertisers demand reform of digital ad ecosystem (WFA, May 2018)

VIEWABILITY

VIEWABILITY CHECKLIST

1. **Choose ad verification technology**

Agree which ad verification technology vendor to use in measurement. Understand the pros and cons of using inbuilt ad server solutions (e.g. Active View in DoubleClick) and independent third-party verification companies (e.g. IAS, MOAT, ComScore etc.).

There are cost and quality implications to each choice which is why an informed decision based on an advertiser's need is essential. For example, Active View is free and built into the Google technology stack but can be perceived as Google marking its own homework. IAS and MOAT are independent third-party vendors, but additional costs and set-up are required for implementation.

2. **Define your measurement standards**

Agree on the standard to measure against. The AANA, MFA and IAB are aligned to the current MRC standard definition of viewability as a minimum.

The current MRC standard is 50% of the ad unit in view for one second for display. For video, the standard is 50% of the ad unit in view for two continuous seconds. However, a bespoke standard may be a better fit.

Agreeing on this standard, and making sure advertiser, agency and vendor understand it, is crucial to success.

(Note: the MRC standard is currently under review. Any changes to published standards will be updated as required for suitability to the local market.)

3. **Set measurement benchmarks**

Once a campaign viewability standard (e.g. MRC standard or bespoke) is agreed on, decide on the percentage of digital campaign ad impressions required to meet the agreed standard. This is the percentage of the total number of measured ad impressions in view.

Refer to the IAB-published Australian benchmarks for viewability which are made available twice per year. Presently, the AANA states advertisers should expect digital campaigns to have 70% of the ads purchased in view.

4. **Ad impressions in view will vary by platform**

Factor in that the percentage of the total number of ad impressions being in view will vary by channel, platform and execution. For example, video pre-roll is a forced view and will often have a higher viewability score than display or mobile placements. More than one benchmark may be required depending on the channel or platform the campaign utilises.

5. **Develop creative for the platform**

Ensure creative is built-for-purpose for the specific platform. One of the biggest issues with viewability is creative that doesn't fit within an ad environment or jars with a user experience. Creative of this nature will not have the required engagement for viewability benchmarks to be achieved. For example, optimising the first five seconds on YouTube or having creative built for the mobile newsfeed on Facebook will likely improve viewability compared to reusing a generic television commercial.

VIEWABILITY

6. **Use the IAB LEAN principles**

Where feasible, ensure the creative agency or production house is adopting the IAB LEAN principles (Light, Encrypted, Ad-choice supported, Non-invasive ads). These simple principles ensure a better experience for the user which helps viewability.

7. **Use 'polite download'**

Ensure the ad creative is being served via 'polite download'. This means the ad will download in the background while the webpage is being formed, increasing loading speed. Again, this will help improve viewability rates.

8. **Decide on the 'right' number of tags**

Tags are necessary for ad serving, audience measurement, DMP tracking and viewability measurement, but too many tags can increase load times and have a negative impact on viewability.

Be aware of the number and composition of tags attached to creative and how this can impact page performance.

For example, heavy creative not built to LEAN principles or weighed down by tags could take up to eight seconds to load. If the page loads in two seconds, the viewability will likely suffer as users might have moved on before the ad appears.

9. **Understand the impact of working in-app environments, video and connected TV (CTV) ads**

Technical implementation for mobile in-app ad viewability verification is more challenging and has historically been a viewability weak spot.

Tracking of viewability on desktop activity is generally straightforward with a tick box within the ad server or demand-side platform. Video and walled garden activity, on the other hand, often requires an additional manual process. Make sure these processes are being followed otherwise activity will not be tracked.

More publishers and platforms now have market-accepted solutions within apps. An industry-wide initiative driven by IAB Tech Lab has made it easier for agencies and advertisers to use a vendor of their choice for in-app ads.

It should be noted that there are technical challenges in tracking viewability of ads being served via over-the-top (OTT) or smart TVs, generally referred to as connected TV, and in this environment, non-measurability does not necessarily mean an ad has not been viewed.

10. **Stay updated on walled garden policies**

There are nuances around what can and can't be measured within certain walled gardens. This will depend on the extent of the integrations that have been implemented by third-party verification vendors.

Have an up-to-date understanding of these limitations and how this will manifest in viewability results.

VIEWABILITY

11. Optimise to viewability at a placement level

When booking with a vendor, there will often be multiple placements or formats running. One placement could be a highly viewable format and another below the fold with low viewability. Optimising at a placement level will ensure the full picture of viewability performance.

Ensure all relevant parties, including vendors, are aware of optimisation strategies before the activity begins. For example, one vendor may have a high overall viewability score, but some placements could be 90% and others 20%. Looking at this on a placement-by-placement basis is required to understand which ones are delivering maximum results.

12. Sense check viewability standards with campaign goals

Ensure viewability standards, approach or optimisation strategies have been sense-checked against other core campaign KPI's or business goals.

Optimising only to viewability could mean the key objective (such as brand lift, reach or sales) is adversely affected. For example, optimising to viewability could lead to upweighting video but video can be an expensive format. The viewability may be high although the extra cost could impact sales or cost per acquisition campaigns.

Alternatively, a certain channel, format or site may have lower viewability but show strong brand lift or preference scores. Optimising to viewability alone could see these options excluded.

Ensure viewability data is feeding through to attribution models as creative that hasn't been seen cannot influence consumers.

13. Consider all the digital quality metrics

Viewability is merely one digital quality metric. It should be considered with wider digital quality parameters such as on-target delivery, brand-safe environments and ad fraud-free inventory. For example, a highly viewable ad in an environment that isn't brand safe or appropriate shouldn't have a higher quality weighting over a lower viewable ad in a brand-safe and ad fraud-free environment.

14. Understand the impact of viewability standards on supply and demand

The higher the viewability standard and measurement that is agreed upon, the more the supply will be reduced which can increase the cost of media and impact performance.

Always factor in performance goals such as sales, cost per action, brand health and lift metrics when planning, buying and optimising to viewability as it may have a detrimental effect if not considered as part of the wider campaign performance goals.

AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY

THE CHALLENGE

In the 2017 financial year, online advertising spend hit $7.6 billion in Australia accounting for 50% of advertising spend in the country. We know that at least 4% of all digital display advertising spend is lost to ad fraud with one study suggesting $116 million a year is forfeited — a significant figure in anyone's eyes.

While ad fraud has the greatest direct financial impact on advertisers, brand safety also takes a hit as the perception and value of a brand is eroded by placement of ads beside content that is deemed unsuitable and, in extreme cases, harmful.

Ad fraud and brand safety are separate and significantly important issues posing a major challenge to advertisers as they consider where to invest their advertising budgets. However, the practices and tools employed to address them are often the same.

WHY ARE AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY IMPORTANT?

Ad fraud is the practice of fraudulently representing online impressions, clicks, conversions or data in order to generate revenue.

Ad fraud describes impressions that result from intentionally deceptive practices, designed to manipulate legitimate ad serving or measurement processes or to create fictitious activity that leads to inflated impression numbers.

Ad fraud skews media results and wastes marketing dollars as no human has seen the advertisement. Publishers are also impacted as they ultimately lose revenue.

The real challenge is that there is no way to remove all risk. The risk can only be minimised.

There are four key descriptors of ad fraud:
- Non-Human Traffic (NHT): Traffic designed to mimic users and inflate audience numbers.
- Invalid Traffic (IVT): Any traffic to a website that is generated – either intentionally or unintentionally – by invalid sources.
- General Invalid Traffic (GIVT): Traffic that comes from known non-human sources on publicly available IP lists such as crawlers, proxy traffic, data centre traffic, bots and spiders.
- Sophisticated Invalid Traffic (SIVT): Non-human traffic that is more difficult to detect and requires advanced analytics or human intervention to analyse and identify. Examples include malware installed on a computer, hijacked devices, cookie stuffing (the practice of dropping multiple cookies after someone views a page or clicks on a single link) and incentivised browsing.

It may sound complicated but at its most simplistic level, ad fraud involves the gaming of digital advertising, mostly through the use of technology.

Some real-world examples of ad fraud include:
- The delivery of pre-roll video placements in display banner slots.
- Falsifying user characteristics such as location and browser type.
- Hiding ads behind or inside other page elements so they cannot be viewed.
- Selling inventory automatically generated by bots or background mobile-app services.
- Serving ads on a site other than the one provided in a real-time-bidding request, a practice known as domain spoofing.
- Hindering a user's opportunity to engage by frequently refreshing the ad unit on a page.

Brand safety refers to exposure to an environment and/or context that will be damaging or harmful to the brand.

AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY

This could be an ad published next to, before, or within an unsafe environment that promotes religious extremism, child endangerment, pornography, drugs or extreme violence.

It is important to distinguish between websites that feature content promoting these topics from websites that report on them via public interest journalism.

It is up to the brand to define what it views as acceptable levels of risk where risk is defined as strategic, operational, financial or regulatory.

By extension, brand inappropriateness refers to a brand appearing in a safe environment, however adjacent to, before or within content or a domain that is deemed by the brand as unsuitable. An example of this could be a brand's ad appearing alongside news content that is negative for the industry or brand.

Brand safety is important for the simple reason that having an impression in the wrong context may be wasteful, but a potentially harmful impression can contribute to poor brand perception, diminished brand equity or even lead consumers to boycott the brand and its products.

AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY CHECKLIST

1. Determine your risk areas

Implement a risk assessment, control and action plan for ongoing review. Brand safety and suitability are broad topics that cover many different parts of a brand's business and there are a range of factors to consider such as whether advertising could fall under certain legislation and regulation. For example, you may need to consider the exclusion of advertising for gaming and alcohol products or restrictions around advertising to children. The more risk averse a brand is, the further the opportunity of inventory is reduced. This can limit reach, increase cost and also restrict the effectiveness of data being used to target an audience.
a. Define the business's risk tolerance. How much of a problem would it be to have a brand safety incident? What are all the themes deemed high and low risk to the brand and what do you consider to be issues? Are there any legal requirements when advertising you need to adhere to?
b. Complete a risk matrix. Consider the different types of inventory you will be using then assess the controls available to manage the risks. Identify which stakeholders are required to sign off on this.
c. Ensure stakeholders are clear there is no way to remove risk, only to minimise, control and adjust it. Explain to various stakeholders — marketing, media, internal communications, legal, chief technical officers and external agencies — the types of risks you may be up against.

2. State which advertising activities the business is NOT allowed to run

This is done by having insufficient controls. If you don't have a way of minimising the risk, then it would be prudent to avoid that environment. For example, user-generated environments, native content, app networks and video networks have no way of preventing ads appearing against inappropriate content.

3. Measure and monitor

Once a risk assessment has been performed, measuring and monitoring is key to ensuring compliance. All parties, from internal to media and creative agencies should be aligned on the assessment and understand the parameters being tracked and measured. This will reduce any conjecture if issues arise.
a. Agree with agency partners and vendors on what you will measure.
b. Agree with agency partners and vendors on acceptable metrics and standards.

AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY

Setting up the criteria to protect your brand's image

4. **Create an exclusion list (also known as a blacklist)**

Websites and mobile applications to exclude may be on the list because they:
- Contain inappropriate content.
- Have excessive ad placement.
- Deliver poor performance.
- Have high levels of fraud.

If you want to achieve the most reach possible, reducing the blacklist will help, but consider what cost this may have to the brand and its image. Reducing the number of sites and apps advertised on will affect reach and cost as well as the resources required to monitor these sites and apps.

5. **Create an inclusion list (also known as a whitelist)**

This approach gives the most control as you are specifically stating the sites and apps where placements can run. Generally speaking, sites and apps with high audience volumes are recommended for this approach. Building up a list of long-tailed sites would be resource intense. This approach would not be recommended for brands looking to target niche content.

Websites and mobile apps to include may be on this list because they:
- Contain appropriate content.
- Have quality ad placements.
- Have low levels of fraud.
- Have a good historical performance.
- Will increase the ability to protect the brand's image, both from a safety perspective and in terms of suitability and relevance.

6. **Create a negative keyword list**

A keyword list is usually used to find contextual environments for ads to appear, but a negative list is made up of words the brand wants to avoid. Use this list to exclude ads from being triggered by toxic content or placed on sites that hold toxic content categories. This method can be used in conjunction with an inclusion/ exclusion list approach. An example of this would be if content on the site refreshes or changes at a regular occurrence, such as a news site. You might choose to avoid negative news such as a terrorist attack or a natural disaster. Ensure you are aware of how often the technology being used scans/spiders the site for content and if the technology is reliant on the site correctly tagging and using metadata for analysis.

7. **Maintain your exclusion and inclusion lists**

Advertisers need to determine a process for the upkeep of their exclusion and inclusion lists.
a. Set up a system of review at regular intervals.
b. Establish if URLs that have been flagged as fraudulent or not brand-safe will be automatically added to the exclusions list or if this will need to be done manually.
c. Understand how exclusion and inclusions lists are applied and verified by agency partners.

8. **Set clear guidelines on transparency and accountability**

For every vendor and partner involved in the transacting or serving of an ad placement, clear guidelines around accountability and transparency need to be set. When establishing or reviewing vendor agreements, the onus is on the advertiser to:
a. Agree how impressions lists are supplied and when.
b. Check whether anonymous/masked URLs are to be blocked.

AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY

    c. Check whether site lists have domain-level transparency; are aggregated exchanges or networks blocked? Do they need to be?

    d. Establish a declaration of any guaranteed inventory sources in an aggregated buy.

    e. Ensure there is the opportunity for any sites to be removed mid-campaign within 24 hours of request.

Tools and technology to ensure ads are not served in situations that don't meet the criteria

9. **Determine your technology**

    a. **Agree which ad verification technology vendor to use.** Understand each vendor's pros and cons and cost implications.

    b. If employing technology, **ensure the vendors are accredited and meet MRC industry measurement standards** for the filtration and disclosure of invalid traffic.

    c. **Is URL analysis needed?** This will be required if you want to analyse a site's URL and the page URLs. For example, a news website may be 95% brand safe but there may be certain articles on the site that are not safe for the brand. URL analysis will help to determine these.

    d. **Will the technology analyse inbound and outbound links?** Inbound and outbound links are sites that link to the page or sites the page links to. For example, a page full of adult images may have no keywords to analyse but may contain links to other adult sites that are an indication of the content.

    e. **Will the technology conduct metadata (code) analysis?** Metadata includes keywords and other indicators in the site code that do not appear on the page itself to indicate the type of content.

    f. **Ads.txt** is an IAB-approved text file that aims to prevent unauthorised inventory sales. The file lists all of the companies authorised to sell a publishers' inventory. Programmatic platforms also integrate ads.txt files to confirm which publishers' inventory they are authorised to sell. The use of ads.txt allows buyers to check the validity of the inventory purchased however, this has not yet been adopted by all publishers and may reduce reach if only ads.txt authorised sites are used.

    g. **Investigate using pre-bid solutions.** As the name suggests, a pre-bid service can assess the brand safety risk ahead of the time of the bid. This can provide additional safety, however, the costs are often much higher and can restrict the reach and performance of the campaign.

10. **Determine your reporting requirements**

    a. Agree on the reporting requirements.

    b. Determine a site list for all impressions delivered.

    c. Establish whether manual URL spot checks will be performed pre, during and post campaign.

11. **Establish a breach process**

Agree on a process if a breach occurs. This needs to cover risk scenarios, stakeholder responsibilities and actions both internally and externally

12. **Asses the campaign implications**

    a. Optimise the media plan taking into account the approach to brand safety and ad fraud and how this will impact campaign cost, coverage/reach.

    b. Understand the percentage of activity that is being run through private marketplace and the open exchange. The open exchange is cheaper and can be effective but there is more possibility of ad fraud or brand safety issues.

    c. Weigh up the benefits of supply and demand to cost.

DATA TRANSPARENCY

THE CHALLENGE

For businesses handling consumer data, demonstrating the ability to secure and protect said data — both your own and that of your customers — is a business imperative that yields a competitive advantage Every phase of the data life cycle (like collection, use, retention, storage, disposal or deletion) must be managed to guarantee compliance with the law, protect the brand and preserve customer confidence.

WHY IS DATA PROTECTION IMPORTANT?

Organisations understand the need to innovate and safeguard the personal and confidential data of customers, employees and business partners. Maintaining best practices of privacy and security controls to comply with the law will help better manage post-breach incidents. Effective data protection will:
- Reduce the chance of reputational damage from a data or cyber breach.
- Strengthen the business by increasing consumer confidence.

THE LAW

The Privacy Act regulates how the digital advertising ecosystem handles personal information, including sensitive information. The Act includes the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) which set out standards, rights and obligations in relation to handling, holding, accessing and correcting personal information.

Parts of the digital advertising ecosystem rely on data analytics which may include personal information. Under Australian law, personal information is information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable.

DATA PROTECTION CHECKLIST

1. Manage consumer consent and control: Champion the user experience

Determine the controls to give to customers when it comes to consent. Under Australian Law, personal information collected by an entity may only be used or disclosed for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless an exception applies.

This means the way personal information is collected, and what the individual is told about the collection, is important for data activities. Businesses should implement the Office of the Australian Privacy Commissioner's (OAIC) Privacy Management Framework which encourages the use of a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA), to inform big-data activities. This includes mapping the information life cycle, identifying what personal information is collected, whether it might be utilised for big data and for what purpose. Undertaking these steps will inform what personal information should be collected, how it should be collected and what notice should be given.

2. Proactively managing privacy protections: Be forward thinking

The Australian Privacy Act requires Australian companies to implement data practices, procedures and systems to ensure ongoing compliance with Australian privacy law. This means compliance is a dynamic and ongoing process. When collecting data on a consumer, the collector becomes a custodian of that data. The Office of the Australian Privacy Commissioner requires the consideration of privacy and data protections throughout the data life cycle including when:
- Existing owned data is used for new purposes.
- Collaborating with vendors (such as CRM, marketers, or cloud IT providers) that involve data sharing.
- Staying up to date with newly introduced legal requirements (like those introduced in early 2018).
- Developing internal policies or strategies with privacy implications.

DATA TRANSPARENCY

3. **Practice data minimisation**

Under Australian Privacy Law, companies are required to actively consider whether they are permitted to retain personal information. When a business no longer needs personal information for any purpose for which it may be used or disclosed, the company should destroy or de-identify that information. A business must take reasonable steps to destroy or de-identify personal information. Best practice guidance on de-identification has been compiled by the OAIC and can be found on the IAB Australia website.

4. **Be in compliance with data breach laws**

New data breach laws introduced to Australia in February 2018 are very similar in substance to new data breach requirements in place in Europe under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The data breach laws force any company in the digital advertising ecosystem — advertiser, agency or publisher — to notify all affected individuals and the Office of the Australian Privacy Commissioner if they experience a data breach which poses a risk of harm.

Minimise the risk of a data breach through the following techniques:
- Educate employees: The oft-used example of a misplaced company laptop can lead to a data breach of hundreds of clients' data. Teach staff the most secure ways of data sharing and storing and how to identify and deal with data breaches.
- Evaluate technology: Check if existing software and hardware can adequately identify and deal with data breaches in real time.
- Minimise the amount of personal information held: This can be a tough one, especially when it comes to advertising databases, but where possible, try and decrease the personal data stored. For more guidance on this, see the resources below.
- Encrypt and anonymise personal data: Encrypt or anonymise personal information where possible. (For more guidance on this, see the resources on page 20.)

5. **Manage data protections in your advertising tech stack**

Any vendor in the digital ecosystem that is processing customer data is liable for the protection of data used. Many marketing professionals rely on third-party vendors (such as CRMs, email service providers, cloud IT services) to interact with customers. The owner of the first-party data is responsible to speak with third-party partners processing customer data to ensure they are taking the proper steps to remain compliant with privacy law. This includes having the tools in place that will allow vendors to both retrieve and destroy data at the end of its life cycle.

6. **Ethically and transparently sourced data**

A whole-of-cycle view of data with deep insight into how and why data is being used is essential for ensuring the right balance between compliance, privacy and innovation. The revelations around U.K. firm Cambridge Analytica in 2018 demonstrate that it is not good enough to think about data sharing in a linear way. Anticipate any risks that might be involved in the processes employed. Ethical decisions around the use of data will be expected of the company when handling customer data – but don't expect these requirements to be spelled out in every case.

FURTHER READING

IAB Australia Technology Purchase Guidelines:
https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/12-research-and-resource/2447-advertising-technology-purchase-guidelines-mar-2018

MRC standards and definitions:
http://www.mediaratingcouncil.org/063014%20Viewable%20Ad%20Impression%20Guideline_Final.pdf

AANA viewability position:
http://aana.com.au/knowledge/resources/aana-launches-paper-ad-viewability/

Viewability whitepaper and industry update from IAB:
https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/guidelines-and-best-practice/guidelines-best-practice/item/3-guidelines-and-best-practice/2244-iab-viewability-whitepaper-dec-2016

Viewability benchmarks for Australia:
https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/12-research-and-resource/2607-iab-viewability-update-apr-2018

IAB Industry Open Measurement Project (OM SDK):
https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/12-research-and-resource/2569-open-measurement-sdk

Display Creative and Mobile Creative Guidelines updated to fully embrace HTML5 technology:
https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/2608-advertising-creative-guidelines-updated-for-html5

Advertising Creative Guidelines - Updated for HTML5:
https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/12-research-and-resource/2608-advertising-creative-guidelines-updated-for-html5

Coalition for better ads:
https://www.betterads.org/

IAB TechLab Data Transparency Framework:
https://www.iab.com/news/datatransparency/ & https://iabtechlab.com/standards/gdpr-transparency-and-consent-framework/

GDPR Implications for AU Companies:
https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/images/AAA_GDPR/IAB-Briefing_GDPR-Compliance-in-the-AU_June2018.pdf

Regulation Update: New Mandatory Data Breach Notification Laws:
https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/guidelines-and-best-practice/guidelines-best-practice/item/3-guidelines-and-best-practice/2410-2396-iab-australia-regulation-update-new-mandatory-data-breach-notification-laws#0ecH6dDXcpqMF82V.99

Guide to Data Analytics and the Australian Privacy Principles; De-identification and the Privacy Act:
https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/iab-blog/blog-articles/entry/iab-australia-hosts-acting-privacy-commissioner-at-privacy-event#dYy8c9zwKURXRzAq.99

The Australian Privacy Act:
https://www.oaic.gov.au/individuals/privacy-fact-sheets/general/privacy-fact-sheet-17-australian-privacy-principles

Privacy Management Framework:
https://www.oaic.gov.au/agencies-and-organisations/guides/privacy-management-framework

SINGLE-PAGE CHECKLIST

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY CHECKLIST

1. Understand the technology that is currently in place
2. Identify how each component of your digital setup is adding value
3. Examine and decide on media buying objectives
4. Determine the best buying method to meet your needs
5. Determine the base technology you need to meet your requirements
6. Decide what additional technology will add value
7. Choose metrics to track outcomes

VIEWABILITY CHECKLIST

1. Choose ad verification technology
2. Define your measurement standards
3. Set measurement benchmarks
4. Determine if different benchmarks are needed per platform
5. Develop creative for the platform
6. Use the IAB LEAN principles
7. Use 'polite download'
8. Decide on the 'right' number of tags
9. Understand the impact of working in-app environments, video and connected TV ads
10. Stay updated on walled garden policies
11. Optimise to viewability at a placement level
12. Sense check viewability standards with campaign goals
13. Consider all the digital quality metrics
14. Understand the impact of viewability standards on supply and demand

AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY CHECKLIST

1. Determine your risk areas
2. State which advertising activities the business is NOT allowed to run
3. Measure and monitor
4. Create an Exclusion List (also known as a Blacklist)
5. Create an Inclusion List (also known as a Whitelist)
6. Create a Negative Keyword List
7. Maintain your Exclusion and Inclusion Lists
8. Set clear guidelines on transparency and accountability
9. Determine your technology
10. Determine your reporting requirements
11. Establish a breach process
12. Assess the campaign implications

DATA PROTECTION CHECKLIST

1. Manage consumer consent and control: champion the user experience
2. Proactively managing privacy protections
3. Practice data minimisation
4. Be in compliance with data breach laws
5. Manage data protections in your advertising tech stack
6. Ensure data is sourced ethically & transparently

DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY   VIEWABILITY   AD FRAUD AND BRAND SAFETY   DATA TRANSPARENCY

Australian Digital Advertising Practices: Issue 1 — July 2018

This document has been prepared by the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA), Interactive Advertising Bureau Australia (IAB) and Media Federation of Australia (MFA) as a resource for the Australian advertising industry. For more information or assistance, please contact the following:

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