Advertising Quality Measurement Buyer's Guide

This Guide outlines the myriad of nuances that a marketer should consider regarding advertising quality measurement during campaign planning. The guide helps facilitate a holistic understanding of advertising quality measurement, which includes the measurement of **viewability**, **brand safety** and **fraud.**

A helpful **IAB Advertising Quality Measurement Checklist** tool is provided to help both the buy and sell sides to align with each other on business decisions in pre-campaign planning to ensure that the right questions are asked upfront to make decisions with more confidence.

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Mission

Advertising quality is in the eye of the beholder - some value brand safety more, some value viewability more, some simply focus on campaign performance. Often, misalignment of priorities and lack of a complete understanding of advertising quality between the buy and sell sides cause unnecessary churn in partnerships.

This Guide outlines the myriad of nuances that a marketer should consider regarding advertising quality measurement during campaign planning. The guide facilitates a holistic understanding of advertising quality measurement, which includes the measurement of viewability, brand safety and fraud. It also empowers the buy and sell sides to align with each other on business decisions in pre-campaign planning through a turnkey checklist tool.

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Introduction

Fundamentally, advertisers should expect their ads to be 1) viewable, 2) displayed next to brand-appropriate content and 3) seen by real people. The respective terms to describe these properties of an ad are **viewability, brand safety and fraud-free**. In this document, they are considered a group of metrics of the quality of an ad and are referred to as Advertising Quality Metrics.

Each Advertising Quality Metric on its own is an important metric and, when applied together, ensure minimal waste across advertising investment. Evaluation of Advertising Quality requires of marketers a holistic approach of viewability, brand safety and fraud-prevention, instead of one or another. Think, for example, is it quality if an ad campaign meets a certain viewability threshold (i.e. 70% of the impressions meeting the designated viewability standard), but some of them are displayed to bots, the wrong consumer, or in an environment that is not appropriate for the brand?

Advertising Quality Metrics are only a few measures of the basic quality of advertisements and should be considered alongside other campaign Key Performance Indexes (KPIs) such as click-through rate, reach of in-demo audience, store visit rate, sales conversion, etc. For example, in order to drive a sales conversion, targeting someone simply because the impression meets the viewability rate may or may not be appropriate.

Many factors can impact the measurement of Advertising Quality Metrics. The varied scenarios that an ad renders can create a multitude of nuances. There are trade-offs with every decision, thus marketers should contemplate these prior to campaign launch and make decisions based on their priorities. In the upcoming sections, this document provides marketers with some examples of the nuances and tradeoffs as well as a checklist tool to enable buyers to decide with confidence.

Examples of the Nuances and Tradeoffs

- **Viewability**
    - Viewability benchmarks for different ad format, environment, and publisher can vary. Carefully choose the basis of benchmarks to measure against, between average viewability on a campaign level and average viewability on a placement level and consider holistically the measuring capabilities for your entire plan.
        - The viewability benchmarks of each format (display vs. video, pre-roll vs. outstream, etc.) and environment (desktop vs. mobile etc.) should be considered independent of each other because of the way they are designed to perform in terms of viewability. It is important to examine the nature of the format and the technology available, and to analyze the various benchmarks instead of assuming that a campaign average viewability can be applied to every placement. For example, viewability doesn't apply to digital audio inventory.
        - On the other hand, in scenarios where brands don't care where ads are delivered as long as the overall delivery hits a certain viewable impression threshold, consistent viewability benchmark is applicable.

    - Consider holistically the measuring capabilities for your entire plan in terms of platforms. For example, web measurement uses JavaScript tags, which does not work for apps without additional API such as MRAID or Open Measurement SDK.

    - Consider the various viewable media charge metric definitions, i.e. "viewable CPM (vCPM)", "CPM with % viewable guarantee" of your preferred supplier(s) before deciding on a viewability threshold.

        - Some suppliers offer a viewable CPM (vCPM) charge metric, meaning marketers do not pay for impressions that do not meet the agreed viewability threshold. This can also be defined as a 100% viewable CPM. The vCPM charge metric is valuable because it

eliminates waste while preserving the opportunity for campaign performance from impressions that live below the fold and/or have low viewability scores.

- Alternatively, some suppliers guarantee a certain % of ads will be viewable, or that the % of viewable ads will meet a marketer's defined viewability threshold. Important: some suppliers may refer to this charge method as CPM or vCPM, so it is critical to understand this detail clearly and remember it throughout the flight.

- Typically, vCPM is based on actual measured and viewable impressions vs. a viewable guarantee where overall viewability rate is evaluated for the entire buy. In the second model unmeasured impressions are typically "projected" using the viewability rate of measured impressions.

- Charge metrics, i.e. vCPM or CPM with % viewable guarantee, will vary by supplier, so it is critical for marketers to understand and remember how viewability is/was defined and priced by each supplier on the plan. Not doing so will lead to unnecessary mid- and post-campaign confusion for buyers and sellers, complicate the processing of third-party measurement and verification reporting, and ultimately cause congestion through the billing cycle.

- **Brand Safety:**
  - Brand safety is in the eye of the beholder — it all depends on what is or is not appropriate for the brand. For example, an R-rated action film might have different standards than a baby products company. Whatever your brand, the expectation should be that your ad will only appear among content you find acceptable. IAB Content Taxonomy should be leveraged by publishers and advertisers to describe the topical "aboutness" of content with the primary purpose of facilitating relevant, brand safe, and effective advertising.

  - Take a nuanced approach rather than blocking entire content categories or keywords. Think of possible false-positives and false-negatives that content category or keyword blocking may trigger, and consider any trade-offs or implications of how you define brand safety.
    - A site may score high, but actually have inappropriate content for that advertiser. For example, financial news is typically a contextually relevant and safe place for financial services brands to advertise, until stories start hitting about malpractices at banks, and SEC settlements, etc.
    - A site may score low on the brand safety scale, but not actually have inappropriate or unsafe content for the brand, if the service being used is limited to keyword search. For example, sites that fall under the news & current affairs category, which are often considered premium, may score low because of certain words that a brand wants to avoid. For example, if "war" or "sex" indicates unsafe content, then sites reviewing the "Avengers: Infinity War" movie or content about "Sex and the City" would be flagged. However, services with advanced algorithms and sophisticated word analysis will not have such classification problems.
    - Another particular example is, unlike article pages, home pages of news and current affairs sites which present a compilation of editorial content spanning diverse subject matters, while section fronts present contextually rich content environments. Thus, blocking the entire content category may apply too harsh of a filter, severely limiting a campaign's scale and potential for contextual alignment and performance.

  - Brand safety should extend beyond keywords, and take into account any applicable age and/or regulatory restrictions.

- For example, alcohol advertisers must consider a 21+ age gate, gambling and tobacco advertisers must consider 18+, and children's brands advertising to parents must ensure they don't run on sites targeting children under 13. Thus, brands should take these details into consideration, and ask suppliers to verify their audience and targeting parameters prior to running media.

- **Fraud:**
  - Fraud can occur on all sites, even premium publisher properties. This can occur due to several factors, e.g. various financial incentives, the technical sophistication of fraudsters, and more. As IAB is working toward standardizing fraud measurement methodology across third-party measurement vendors, there are currently variances in each vendor's measurement of fraud. In consideration of this, buyers and sellers tend to define their own fraud % threshold, and establish make-good provisions that trigger if/when the accepted threshold is surpassed, as measured by the third-party vendor.

  - Industry accepted certification standards such as Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) have been established to help eliminate fraudulent advertising traffic. TAG certification is a rigorous process, requires a financial investment on the part of the supplier, and takes a period of time, commitment, and action to complete. Increasingly, to reinforce their standing as good actors, suppliers are registering to become TAG certified and exhibit the TAG Certified Against Fraud (CAF) seal as a symbol of their compliance once they have successfully passed the audit process.

  - It is important to understand what marketer's selected fraud vendor is classifying and measuring as fraud. While Invalid Traffic (IVT) includes different ways to measure fraudulent traffic, not all metrics within IVT indicate fraudulent activity. For example, creative audits systems such as ad preview on ad servers are marked as General Invalid Traffic.

As you can see, there is a lot to consider – and a lot of complexity - when it comes to advertising quality related to Viewability, Brand Safety and Fraud. To help facilitate a productive discussion between the buyer and the seller, IAB has prepared a helpful Advertising Quality Checklist. The hope is that this checklist will be used during the pre-planning stages to help make decisions with confidence. By asking the right questions upfront, buyers will be in a better and more knowledgeable position for a successful campaign with the desired advertising quality which should, therefore, help eliminate unnecessary churn during flight.

IAB ADVERTISING QUALITY MEASUREMENT CHECKLIST

To prepare for a successful campaign with desired advertising quality, all parties should complete the following prior to campaign launch:

- [ ] **AGREE ON THE BUSINESS AND CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVE**
  E.g. x% viewability, video completion rate, click-through rate or view-through rate, interaction rate, incremental sales conversions, etc.
- [ ] **WHICH ENVIRONMENTS DO YOU SUPPORT?**
  - Desktop, mobile, audio, Over-the-top (OTT), or Connected TV(CTV)
  - Web vs. app

CONFIRM ADVERTISING QUALITY METRICS DETAILS OF THE CAMPAIGN:

VIEWABILITY

- [ ] What is each supplier's capability for supporting viewability?
- [ ] How does each supplier define a viewable impression?
- [ ] Which definition of viewability to apply to the campaign, e.g. MRC standard, custom standard, supplier defined, etc.?
- [ ] Define the viewability % goal (if there is one). e.g. KPI 95%+ viewability for in-app VAST Video.
- [ ] Who will be measuring it, publisher, tech supplier or third-party viewability verification vendor? Who will be paying for it?
- [ ] What is the ad format and does the format's behavior align with the viewability goal? i.e. Are you basing it off the appropriate benchmarks?
- [ ] What is the billable currency - 100% viewable CPM (vCPM), or CPM with a guaranteed viewability % threshold?
- [ ] What happens if the viewability % threshold is not met? How much make good? How much of a budget clawback? Other concession?

BRAND SAFETY

- [ ] Define brand safe content vs. brand unsafe content.
- [ ] Define what adjacency means to you in different environments e.g. a scrollable environment (in-feed) vs. a pre-roll and mid-roll environment in video.
- [ ] Decide what type of inventory you will run in, i.e. article vs. video vs. audio.
- [ ] Ensure your suppliers support brand safety filters across all channels. Speak with supplier about whether inventory can be measured or not. For example, in-app content measurement by third-party verification is currently limited.
- [ ] Map your brand safety definition to your suppliers' brand safety filters.
  - Black lists or white lists
  - Keywords
  - Content types
  - Comments section
  - Monitoring vs. blocking
  - Age and/or regulatory specifics

FRAUD PREVENTION

- [ ] Ask if your inventory suppliers are TAG certified and, if so, when they became compliant . Ask for their TAG ID should you decide to validate their registration and certification. What is your reconciliation preference? Make good, deactivate publishers, budget clawback, etc.?
- [ ] Ask if the inventory is Ads.txt compliant?
- [ ] Define a fraud % threshold, and establish make-good provisions that trigger if/when the accepted threshold is surpassed, as measured by the third-party vendor.
- [ ] Which vendor will you be using for reporting on fraud? Whose tags to use to measure IVT? Who will be paying for it?
- [ ] What does (and doesn't) your vendor classify as Invalid Traffic?
- [ ] Map your definition of fraud to your vendors' fraud filters.
  - Blacklist vs. whitelist (of sites, traffic sources, or IP addresses)
  - Blocking vs. monitoring
- [ ] Ensure the vendor you work with supports IVT for the channels you want to run in, e.g. in-app vs. web, desktop vs. mobile vs. OTT, etc.
- [ ] How do you define SIVT (sophisticated invalid traffic) vs. GIVT (general invalid traffic)? Will you be able to generate a report that breaks down the different SIVT and GIVT filters?

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