

TAKE 5:

WHAT IS VIEWABILITY?

Viewability Defined

Viewability is a measure of the extent to which online ads and messages are seen by an actual person. The topic has become hot of late out of a recognition that many online and mobile ads may never be seen by a person because they never appear in the visible screen of the user. Here are some examples of instances in which an ad may be “called” by an ad page, but never viewed by an actual human being:

- An ad that is placed near the bottom of a web page, which a user never sees because they leave the page without visiting that part of the page.
- An ad that appears on a screen for less than a second because the user moves off the page quickly.
- An ad where only a small portion of the unit is displayed in the user’s screen.
- Ad ad view driven by a bot, or nonhuman web browser.

Why it Matters

Many advertisers are distressed to learn that ads that they pay for never actually appear in front a person. As a result, some believe that the shift to digital of advertising dollars is being slowed by advertisers reticent to “waste” part of their budgets. Advertisers are not surprisingly angered that their dollars are not affecting customer perceptions and behavior.

There’s a big challenge here because advertising is generally purchased by the impression, but a viewability standard is counting viewed impressions. For years, media companies and publishers have incorporated ads to their pages in an effort to better monetize content. Many in the industry believe we should move to a cost per viewable impression buying model, which would leave publishers with a great deal less advertising to sell. That means higher prices and potentially less publisher revenue.

None of these arguments detract from the idea that when an advertiser pays for an impression it should be viewed by a human. Advertisers would also do well to remember that viewability affects all advertising, not just digital. Certainly many magazine readers don’t look at every page in a publication, and many people may not be present in front of a TV when it displays ads. In fact, for years agencies have discounted the noticing value of impressions based upon the day part in which they appear, in the belief that during day parts like Daytime consumers are more likely to be out of view of the screen.

Viewability Standards by Medium

Viewability standards were first developed for PC Display ads. IAB was a major driver of these Display standards.

- At least 50% of the ad
- Must be visible in the user's screen
- For a minimum of 1 second

For video, viewability has been defined in similar terms, though with different standards:

- At least 50% of the player
- Must be visible on the user's screen
- With the ad playing
- For a minimum of two seconds

Official mobile viewability standards have not yet been promulgated and are expected in Q4.

But the MRC has provided interim mobile viewability guidelines. They essentially replicate the PC web guidelines, except that they also add a new category of ad state - loaded. A loaded ad is essentially an ad that does appear in some way, but does not meet the viewable standard. According to Ad Age, "[t]he MRC carved out a spot for 'loaded ads' because 'measurement of both pixels in view and time in view may be particularly challenging in mobile at present.'"

Many advertisers and publishers have developed their own viewability standards out of the belief that these guidelines are too minimal in scope, or that their unique ad types warrant a different set of standards. Some advertisers, for example, require that a video play must be user initiated, or in a certain sized player, or last longer than 2 seconds.

ABOUT TAKE 5

The Take 5 series is designed to help senior marketers learn more about data-driven customer marketing by creating short educational pieces that can be read and absorbed in less than five minutes. The main content of each Take 5 is 600 words or less to stay focused and brief. The Take 5 series will also be available as a collection – a primer on data driven customer marketing.

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ABOUT APSALAR

Apsalar, the leader in mobile data management, helps direct marketing brands get better marketing effectiveness by providing a mobile data management platform that delivers a true understanding of customer behavior in apps and across other marketing channels.

Apsalar
MOBILE DMP

- APSALAR ATTRIBUTION**
Collect and measure in-app consumer behavior and marketing performance. Measure every in-app action relevant to your business
- APSALAR AUDIENCES**
Unite your first party data from all sources, enrich it with third party data, and build high performance marketing audiences
- APSALAR DATASYNC**
Easily and safely share customer audiences and data with your digital marketing platforms, including analytics, marketing automation, media companies and legacy DMPs

The Apsalar Mobile DMP enables brands to measure marketing effectiveness, enhance, manage, enrich and segment profiles to build audiences, and easily and safely connect to other marketing partners so brands can confidently share their data and audiences.