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IAB EUROPE'S GUIDE TO QUALITY

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Section 1. Introduction

Quality matters for several reasons. Perhaps most importantly, for ad effectiveness. The environment in which an ad loads is one of the primary factors that will influence the user's perception of, and reception to, the brand's messaging. A thoughtful creative package dumped into a chaotic or low-end inventory environment is a good way to waste the first impression the user may have of a company and its products.

More tactically, running ads on low-quality sites increases the probability that the ad may never be seen at all or, if it has been seen, it may be ignored or go unnoticed. This is particularly true if, for example, the page is cluttered with other ad units as well, or if the page takes so long to load that the ad doesn't render until the user has already scrolled past it or even left the page entirely.

Quality media is also a differentiator for premium publishers in a market that increasingly commoditised the table stakes criteria of validity, viewability, and brand safety. By going above and beyond those signals and achieving quality standards that stand apart from a peer group, publishers can better monetise their inventory by providing premium environments that align with brand messaging efforts.

For advertising to make an impact, ads must meet certain quality criteria across channels, formats and platforms. Absent that clarity, marketers would lose confidence in their digital investments, impacting not only the quality of content produced and consumed online, but the ability for consumers to access it for free.

The Consumer's Perspective

Understanding consumers' emotional responses to ads, as well as their perceptions of them, in high versus low quality environments will better equip marketers for planning their digital campaigns. The quality of content in which an ad appears matters to consumers and has a significant impact on their fondness of a brand. IAS ran a survey, [The Ripple Effect](#) to get an understanding from consumers how important high quality content was for them.

The study revealed that seeing ads beside high-quality content is important for the majority (91%) of UK consumers and drives greater returns, with 65% of consumers more likely to engage with ads when surrounded by high-quality content.

The study indicates widespread favourability for premium-quality ad placements. Consumers across markets not only share the UK's preference for high-quality ad environments – additionally France (90%), the U.S. (83%), and Japan (82%) – but also an inclination towards tailoring. Almost nine in ten (87%) UK consumers perceive ad relevance as important, alongside 93% of respondents in France and 80% in the U.S.

The higher likelihood of consumer engagement when surrounded by high-quality content creates a ripple effect, climbing to 69% in Spain and 65% in the UK and France. Consumer response swings in a negative direction as ad quality drops. Almost nine in ten (88%) UK consumers are annoyed when ads appear next to low quality content and the chances of engagement fall, with only two in 10 (22%) likely to engage with an online ad. Annoyance is also reflected at an international level, with poor placement driving irritation for 94% of consumers in Spain, 92% in France and 83% in Germany.

Marketers need to continue to make a concerted effort in ensuring ads are run in high-quality environments, to not only reach consumers, but make better connections with them as well. A practical way to ensure high media quality is to optimise media buys by using pre-bid filters. Pre-Bid filters give marketers access to verified/vetted inventory which matches their campaign strategy. This way, advertisers minimise impression wastage which directly affects the campaign budgets.

The Brand Impact

So how does quality impact on brand favourability, memorability, and brand recall? [According to DoubleVerify/ Harris Poll research](#), consumers hold advertisers accountable for the credibility and accuracy of the content they advertise on — thus making quality a crucial component of strategy and optimisation. In fact, two-thirds would stop using a brand if its ad appeared next to fake or offensive content, and nearly 90% of consumers feel that brands bear responsibility for ensuring their ads run beside content that is safe.

Quality starts with transparency — first into the device and app, then into the content itself. With that trust and confidence in place, brands can make sound decisions in their media investments across all channels. And advertisers are just one part of the ad ecosystem. For an ad-supported ecosystem to thrive, publishers also need to be able to monetise their content, it's how they pay their journalists and ensure consumers can continue to benefit from the reporting they provide.

Section 2. Definition – What is Quality?

The goal of advertising is for the brand message to be viewed by a real human in an appropriate environment. Achieving these criteria results in a higher probability to drive attention by the user and hence create an effective ad experience that produces positive business outcomes.

Quality media is broadly defined as the subset of inventory in which a high probability exists for advertising to be effective. While the specific quality signals may vary from one advertiser to another – for example, some marketers may prioritise fast-loading pages or ad clutter, others may want to stay away from newly-registered domains, while others may prioritise the content on the page – we believe that creating standards for media quality that incorporate industry best practices and prioritise the user experience will raise the probability for users to be engaged with ads and, therefore, to drive business KPIs.

When it comes to what makes a successful campaign, and before brands can even start thinking about specific performance KPIs, it's important to have a clear foundation of quality.

From an ad tech perspective, quality is a prerequisite to performance and it's the combination of quality and performance that really drives the success of campaigns.

Components of Quality

Quality comes in a lot of different forms, but can be boiled down into two components. First, there are core factors to quality that every ad should adhere to, including:

- An ad needs to have the opportunity to be seen by a real-human
- An ad must be placed in a contextually brand safety environment (no violence, hate, defamation, etc.)
- An ad should not fund illegal activities (piracy, counterfeit goods, etc.), unwanted/forced user experiences (malware), or via deceptive tactics such as hidden links, false claims, pop-ups/unders, or unwanted redirects
- An ad opportunity must be transparently auctioned, meaning no features are being masked or misrepresented (domain, app, device, etc.)
- All local legal laws and regulations should be adhered to, including consumer privacy

The second component to quality is driven by the advertiser and their marketing strategy. Examples of these include:

- Geo-restrictions: Ensure messaging is only seen in relevant geo's
- Brand suitability: Ensure messaging is only seen adjacent to content that makes sense for the brand
- Audience: Only target audiences that are interested in the product's or service's messaging
- Time of day: Only serve ads during a given time of the day
- Environment:
 - Only serve ads on TVs, websites, mobile applications
 - Only serve ads on in-stream placements
 - Only serve ads that are at least X% viewable

At the end of the day, it's all about a value exchange, publishers are creating content that is valuable to consumers and advertisers are looking to reach those consumers to drive lift in their products and services. Every impression is not the same and each has different attributes that dictate the quality and value.



Section 3. Ad Fraud

For advertising to perform, it must be seen by real people. As we know, fraud follows the money. Without ad fraud detection, the impact of fraud can be significant as a brand's advertising efforts are wasted on non-humans.

Fraudulent and invalid traffic are highly prevalent in the online advertising ecosystem, which causes significant negative impact, including:

- Lost revenue for advertisers; decreased yield for publishers
- Questionable measurement metrics
- Negative brand association — specifically related to criminal enterprise, malware, poor consumer experience and environments out of alignment with brand positioning
- Poor consumer experience, making solutions like ad blockers even more attractive
- Overall lack of trust

Right now, ad fraud accounts for one out of every three dollars spent by digital advertisers – and unless a dramatic change is made, [Forrester](#) predicts that the industry stands to lose \$10.9 billion from fraudulent advertising.

This means that fraud detection and prevention tools must be even more sophisticated, focusing on three key tenets: coverage, speed and accuracy. Furthermore, these tools need to be applied across all media, platforms, devices and fraud types.

So, where are we at right now with ad fraud, why has it not been resolved, and what action can we all take to help stop it?

Fraud fluctuates depending on the country and the device. IAS sees from its [H2 2020 Media Quality Report](#) that fraud fluctuated from 0.4% - 11.7% depending on whether buyers implement an ad fraud prevention or detection strategy. Unsurprisingly, campaigns that do not utilise any ad fraud mitigation strategy attract the most fraud globally.

Ad fraud is a problem that shows little sign of disappearing any time soon, but there are ways you can help the industry to beat the bots.

Ad Fraud - Best Practices

Optimised-against-fraud campaigns in Western Europe are 10 times less likely to be exposed to fraud than those lacking protection. The argument to put ad fraud prevention technology in place is quite simply, undeniable.

Here are 10 tips to successfully prevent fraud in your next campaign:

1. Vet your supply by using technological and manual checks.
2. Use verification and fraud solutions that can confirm ads were delivered to the desired sites, devices, and geographies.
3. Use fraud solutions that have been accredited for both General and Sophisticated IVT.
4. Measure fraud across all campaigns to understand anti-fraud performance.
5. Vet your vendors and partners; ask how they measure for malicious bots and other forms of IVT.
6. Implement blocking technology or use anti-targeting technology to avoid infected machines or pages with historically high fraud levels.
7. Use pre-bid filtering to avoid fraud in programmatic buys.
8. Where needed, use exclusion and/or inclusion lists.
9. If it's too good to be true, it probably is. Focus less on low CPMs and more on hitting real KPIs tailored to your campaign goals.
10. Offer and request more visibility and transparency into where programmatic advertising is being served.

Ad Fraud and Connected TV

Another cause for concern is fraud seen on emerging channels like Connected TV (CTV), which represents one of the fastest growing content consumption channels in Europe. In fact, CTV viewership has grown to reach 50% of households (representing 61.5 million households) in Europe's five biggest markets, according to a [SpotX report](#). Unfortunately, the popularity of the platform attracts fraud.

Fraud on CTV typically falls into these categories:

- **Spoofing:** Fraudsters may buy lower-price mobile or desktop display inventory for less than a \$1 CPM, change the ad calls to resemble premium CTV video inventory, and resell the inventory at CPMs frequently greater than \$20.
- **Fraudulent apps:** Fraudsters can easily create their own CTV apps and release them to both open and closed app stores. Hundreds of apps are out there with few downloads, but millions of impressions. Some fraudsters create ostensibly legitimate tech tools that they offer to app creators; these tools are then used as a "trojan horse" that allows them to commit fraud - all unbeknownst to the app developer.

- **SSAI fraud:** Server-side Ad Insertion (SSAI) technology has some amazing benefits - like reducing latency, thereby speeding delivery and improving the viewing experience. Unfortunately, it can be leveraged to generate fraud at scale. Fraudsters can either create their own servers or buy into cloud space to completely falsify the information about an impression opportunity (app/IP/device/etc.) and generate completely fake traffic. Imagine millions or billions of impressions firing off from a server farm. And because measurement doesn't happen directly on the CTV device, but at the server level, it can be even more challenging to detect.
- **Bot fraud:** As on other devices, bot fraud occurs when impressions are served to a fraudulent, non-human requestor. Often, bots will target CTV inventory by spoofing the device type to appear as if they are a CTV device.

Understanding the nuances of digital ad fraud, especially in the age of accelerated digitisation and increased advertising budgets, is immensely critical. If left unchecked, ad fraud can lead to wasted media spends, skewed performance metrics, a decrease in advertisers' bottom line and, most importantly, a negative brand association.

That is why it is important to ensure that a brand's digital ads are safe and delivered to a real person.

Here are a few best practices to ensure brands are protected:

- Understand ad fraud and its techniques
- Work with a third-party verification provider to measure and protect campaigns
- Work with fraud-certified platforms, especially on CTV, to ensure that the content is not compromised
- Ensure the publishers that buyers are working with have adopted ads.txt
- Ask questions - DSPs, SSPs, and verification providers are trying to protect advertisers from fraud and can help better address any concerns
- And finally, do a sniff test - if it seems too good to be true, it probably is

Ad fraud remains one of the digital advertising industry's biggest hurdles. However, thanks to the overall advances in verification tools and machine-learning technology, our industry is actively working together to build solutions that limit the influence of the fraudsters across all channels, formats and devices. For more information on ad fraud, please read [IAB Europe's 'Guide to Ad Fraud'](#). Published in December 2020, the guide expands on the above best practices to help drive media quality and effectiveness in the digital advertising industry.

Section 4. Brand Risk

As the complexity of finding and interacting with audiences increases due to the deprecation of the third-party cookie looming, the importance of holistic measurement and how we utilise data becomes paramount. A less-is-more approach to data, and creating clear baselines of what media quality and performance mean for each brand is key.

But in a fragmented ecosystem, creating a baseline and aligning it with broader business imperatives is easier said than done. A straightforward baseline of quality might be built around making sure ads appear at the right time and in the right place. Adding to that, they should reach the right audience, in a brand-safe, fraud-free, viewable and targeted environment.

In order to keep brand safety top of mind, standards laid out by the 4A's Advertiser Protection Bureau (APB) [Brand Safety Floor and Brand Suitability Framework](#) that is also supported by the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (GARM) should be built upon as necessary, for any specific brands.

According to [DoubleVerify/Harris Poll](#) research, 87% of consumers feel that brands bear responsibility for ensuring their ads run adjacent to content that is safe, and 65% of consumers would be likely to stop using the brand or product if they viewed the brand's digital ad next to false or inflammatory content. As brands are forced to make rapid decisions to respond to an endlessly evolving news cycle, many advertisers' initial reaction is to consider blocking news content wholesale or to use broad keywords to try to protect themselves against high-profile and negative topics. The result, however, is often a significant reduction in scale, as well as inadvertent negative repercussions for legitimate news publishers. This has advertisers moving beyond brand safety to brand suitability.

Taking a more nuanced approach to brand safety and suitability can help advertisers achieve coverage of high-performance content while having safeguards in place that align with specific brand values. This process includes creating a brand safety profile that establishes a strong floor of protection and builds on that with controls like inclusion/exclusion lists and avoidance categories that offer protection against specific content that is unsuitable for the brand, while still supporting trusted sites.

Not all brands will create the same blueprint. For example, a luxury sports car brand may not have the same approach to brand suitability as a fast-food restaurant brand.

In order to achieve the right balance of coverage, brands should establish a clear understanding of their core brand values and of which topics or events may (or may not) fit into those values. Having firm answers to these questions will enable advertisers to effectively work with verification providers to leverage the proper tools to avoid unsuitable content while still maintaining scale.

With a clear baseline in place, organisations can begin benchmarking quality and performance based on data that translates across multiple markets, channels and partners. This enables them to align and compare performance on specific sites and apps, or individual campaigns, orientated around meaningful business outcomes, and customer experiences.

Refining A Brand Safety Strategy

As content consumption and creation has boomed, so have the chances of inappropriate ad placements. While brand safety is already familiar, the constantly evolving online landscape has pushed it back up the priority list. For marketers, that makes it vital to both understand industry benchmarks and find smarter ways to manage their ad adjacency accordingly. As brands seek to harness the vast potential for broader exposure and engagement, they'll also need a refined strategy for tackling multiple types of risk – ideally with real-time capabilities as emerging threats can evolve quickly.

Covid-19 wasn't the only world-changing event of 2020, with racial injustice, civil unrest and varied political tensions driving societal shifts. This inevitably caused disruption across the digital media space and had a significant impact on online risk.

[Research from IAS](#) shows that in The UK, for instance, experienced a 3.3% increase in desktop display advertising risk that drove total levels to 5.8% in H2 2020; the highest rate since 2017 — a year marked by national tragedy and high-profile brand safety incidents. The rise in brand risk was reflected in environments globally.

Although year-on-year display risk stayed flat during H2 2020, desktop video saw the biggest rise in brand risk as a 1.4% increase sent the average to 7.7% overall. It is, however, also worth noting that mobile hasn't been risk free – mobile web video claimed the largest risk level of all environments at 8.6% globally, even reaching 14% in the US. Meanwhile, mobile display risks for UK brands grew significantly; climbing from 3.7% in H2 2019 to 6% in H2 2020.

Consideration #1 - Tailoring your brand safety strategy

Brands invest a significant amount of time creating an image, cultivating consumer perception and fostering associations. Therefore, it's very important to ensure digital messages appear in suitable environments, not solely to avoid risk, but also to effectively reach the right consumers.

All brands are unique and their definition of safety and suitability is driven by their values and goals. Here are three tips on how to employ a multi-layered approach, with customisation and comprehensive protection:

Set your base protection - To ensure your reputation is undamaged, determine your baseline protection. Start with your brand values, to determine your risk tolerance, then set your brand safety settings to balance campaign goals with the brand's risk tolerance. This brand risk generally involves specific types of content covered by standard content categories and site inclusions.

Risk calibration - After identifying risky topics, brands need to define what level of risk each of these have. Some may be high, some low - this level of risk will be different for all brands. Consider the potential reduction in scale and missed opportunities from overly restrictive tactics to make the most of your campaigns.

Customise with context - For an additional layer of customisation, brands should consider the specific nuances around context and sentiment - this can be used for both negative & positive targeting. For more granular content adjacency control, brands can upgrade keyword URL blocking to page-level analysis that takes into account context, semantics, sentiment, and emotion of the content.

Consideration #2- Buying models

When approaching brand safety and suitability, buyers should consider that different inventory and buying models offer different levels of knowledge and control over the contextual environments where ads will be displayed.

There is a diminishing scale of insight when moving from single to aggregated inventory sources and from direct to indirect buying models. For example, consider a direct buy with a publisher who owns all content creation and exercises full editorial control and compare this to buying on the open exchange across several inventory aggregators, which include non-curated and user generator content. For programmatic buys, pre-bid technology is utilised to minimise impression waste and to ensure that buyers do not bid on impressions that will eventually end up failing due to brand safety concerns.

Pre-bid targeting segments are integrated within all major Demand Side Platforms (DSP), allowing brands to target only safe impressions before ever placing a bid.

Consideration #3 - Device types and environments

Brand risk is measured differently depending on the device and the environment. Display ads, for example, use the same measurement methodology on desktop as on mobile web with certain nuances considered. In-app ads however, are handled differently, while social media platforms require unique measurement solutions for their unique customer experiences.

Mobile in-app - As consumers are spending more time on their mobile devices, in-app has become a key focus for campaign planning. With [8 in 10 mobile display ads](#) being traded programmatically, it is imperative that advertisers leverage targeting tools that are built specifically for mobile in-app environments.

Programmatic in-app environments – while slightly more brand safe than desktop environments – produce significant challenges for brands. This is mainly due to a lack of reporting and optimisation tools across the industry. That said, when in-app pre-bid targeting or automation is applied to programmatic environments, brands can virtually eliminate brand safety violations.

Video - Video advertising is rapidly growing across all devices and for good reason: it continues to be the most impactful medium for reaching consumers. Despite witnessing growth across the board, video is still causing a challenge for advertisers in terms of measurement due to the mix of devices and environments used when video is consumed.

Social - The proliferation of user-generated content and sharing of risky content on social media can pose a significant challenge for a brand. Understanding the content you want your brand to be aligned to is absolutely critical. No matter how sophisticated brand safety solutions become, you will need to understand what are the suitable environments and the audiences you want to target.

Connected TV (CTV) - Addressing brand safety in CTV today is still a nascent area and innovation in this space is imminent. Currently brand safety within CTV environments is most widely available at the app-level.

With app-level brand safety, brands can gain access to classifications of CTV apps and can use this information to determine if there are certain areas of CTV inventory that do not align to their brand safety requirements.

App-level brand safety is not as sophisticated and can present a challenge to buyers with limiting scale.

The latest innovation in brand safety for CTV centres on channel and content-level brand safety. Where brands will be able to understand and define the CTV programmes that they want their advertising to appear alongside. This is critically important in CTV environments where there are a multitude of content aggregators and apps can host a plethora of content. In order to support the drive in this area of innovation, publishers should make content-level information available to their buyers to give them the ability to target contextually relevant ads on CTV.

Ad verification in CTV has been successful when providers work with publishers directly to gain access to content-level information and can validate that video ads are played to completion, and are fraud-free.

For more information and guidance on tackling brand safety issues in CTV, please refer [to IAB Europe's Guide to Brand Safety & CTV](#). Published in May 2021, the guide helps all stakeholders working in the CTV ecosystem maintain best practices and ensure brand-safe environments for advertisers. Written by CTV experts from IAB Europe's Quality & Transparency Taskforce including Comscore, DoubleVerify, FreeWheel, MediaMath, Rakuten Advertising, SpotX and IAB Tech Lab, the guide also looks at the future landscape and what the market needs to do in terms of standardisation, measurement, and transparency to fully support this emerging channel.

THE IAB EUROPE GUIDE TO BRAND SAFETY IN CTV



Brand Risk – Best Practices

Here are some easy-to-implement best practices that can help protect your brand's reputation when advertising online:

- Determine brand value and campaign goals. Determine the risk tolerance and set brand suitability settings, balancing this with campaign goals.
- Choose the right partners. Partner with solutions that comprehend context fully using natural language processing and can deliver accurate sentiment and emotion analysis.
- Prepare for a crisis by partnering with your communications team and verification partners to prevent this from happening. Create a plan in case the worst does happen.
- Be honest with your partners and publishers – make your expectations clear from the start and keep an open dialogue throughout your partnership.
- Reduce the reliance on keyword-only strategies. Consider contextual segments in their place. Apply this approach at a post and pre-bid level in order to ensure brand suitability whilst minimising wasted budget on low quality impressions.
- Consider buying models and apply the same pre-bid filter against both OMP and PMP buys. Private marketplaces (PMP) are a great opportunity once key partners have been established. However, it is crucial that advertisers don't lose sight of their brand suitability goals and ensure the quality of the media being passed via these curated marketplaces or PMPs meets their requirements for brand safety and suitability.
- Keep track of industry benchmarks to ensure you're performing at your best.
- Stay informed. Know your partners, their capabilities and how they can help you achieve your campaign goals.
- Don't just set it and forget it. Keep your exclusion list and keyword lists up to date and review them.

Section 5. Viewability

Advertiser demand for viewable impressions has meant that viewable rates have risen steadily year-over-year. High viewable rates are now almost a given within a campaign — and certainly table stakes for advertisers. In fact, according to [DoubleVerify's 2021 Global Insights Report](#), overall video viewability reached 70%, enough to meet the IAB's recommended target threshold for viewability.

But just as the Internet can never be completely brand safe or free of fraud, all ads cannot be viewable. From page timeouts to a user scrolling too quickly, there are a number of reasons why some ads don't have the opportunity to be seen, which is why measuring viewability remains critical. And it is particularly challenging to measure viewability on video impressions. Ads that are not seen or heard are essentially wasted media for the advertiser.

So when looking at the evolution of digital advertising, it makes sense that viewability has continued to be a top concern for marketers. The entire digital advertising ecosystem exists to support brands and their efforts to reach and influence consumers.

Whether caused by a growing number of channels and platforms or out of necessity to stay connected, consumers are increasing their time spent with digital media. It was not long ago that viewability rates of 50% were the industry norm, but rates are on the rise. According to the [Integral Ad Science H2 2020 Media Quality Report](#), viewability averages stand above 65% across nearly all formats and environments worldwide.

While this marks an impressive accomplishment, that range indicates that as much as one-third of digital ads are going unseen by consumers in certain environments. This viewability gap creates challenges for both the buy and sell-sides of the digital media business.

Viewability best practices

Marketers often talk about reaching the right consumers, in the right places, in the appropriate context. But first, marketers should ensure their ads have the opportunity to be viewable and to make a lasting impact. After all, advertising can't be effective without first being seen.

Here are a few recommended best practices when it comes to viewability:

- Follow industry standards for viewability
- Leverage IVT detection and prevention, as well as blocking technology, so that you're only sending ads to real people – and paying for safe, viewable impressions
- Leverage predictive targeting for viewability
- Reallocate spend to formats that are performing better during your campaigns
- Look out for new ad formats that may result from publishers trying to optimise their site
- Ensure cross-platform, cross-device and cross-browser viewability measurement using geometric methodology
- Work with MRC-accredited verification providers for both display and video viewability
- Make sure the verification provider can support custom measurement based on brand needs
- Advocate for OMID adoption, eliminating the need for multiple vendor integrations and facilitating third-party verification measurement for ads served to mobile app environments
- Look beyond standard viewability metrics toward attention metrics like exposure and engagement to help drive performance



Section 6. In Geo

Geolocation advertising uses location data to serve relevant advertising to audiences. Like other components of quality, ads seen outside the intended geography are wasted on consumers who are unlikely to relate to the messaging. For example, a local Edinburgh auto dealer ad, with specific messaging for the region, that shows up on a user's CTV app in London is essentially a wasted opportunity to engage a relevant consumer.

With the rise in mobile and smart devices, think laptop through to fitness tracker, geolocation advertising is becoming more and more sophisticated and can enhance the quality of any campaign by making it geographically relevant.

There are various forms of in-geo technology including geolocation, geofencing and event targeting. Advertisers can work with verification providers to implement the relevant approach for their campaign.



Section 7. Creative Execution

What makes a good creative for consumers?

1. Shoot for the Brain - or the proverbial Heart, which requires a Brain

Helping to fund quality journalism, advertising enables consumers to have the right to information and free choice in modern economies, as it feeds most of our free and democratic access to news, knowledge and information.

This value exchange should not be abused and instead, is treasured by the majority of brands who want to build meaningful relationships with their target audiences. Consumers should therefore not be subjected to shoddy or inappropriate advertisements.

Advertising should not be manipulation, advertising should not be easy puns, advertising should never be blatant hard selling, advertising should not be a collection of 'lifestyle', 'aspirational' imagery/sounds cobbled together in the hope that the so-called stupid masses follow your brand, your service or your product.

As David Ogilvy so aptly put it, back in the 1960's, "The consumer is not a moron, she's your wife". Read your partner, your father, your best friend. It still holds true and, hopefully, it will always hold true, lest we become a society of blind followers of the latest social media trend - or trendier, or pseudo-political figure, for that matter.

So speak to your audience's brain (and/or a proverbial heart, which requires a brain). Is it harder? Yes, but it pays in the end, for a lot longer. Once the ones with a brain (and/or a proverbial heart, which requires a brain) opt for your brand or message, they will know why, they will stick to their decision, they will follow their emotions and they will go through the trouble of spreading your good word.

2. Inform, Amaze or Move - but always Tell a Story

This really is so simple that it becomes amazing itself why it is not followed consistently. For countless millennia, humankind has gathered around 'the campfire' - in whatever form, shape or electronic channel it took along the years - to listen to stories. Does anybody really believe we, as a species, have changed over the tiny blink of the last one hundred years? Really?

Your story may be informative - telling people what they didn't know - as long as it is true, never, ever, forget that, or you'll be met with the unpleasant surprise of finding out that the fastest way to kill a bad product or service is to give it a grand advertising campaign.

Your story may be amazing - telling people something they did not know in such a way that their jaws drop to the floor. Again, truth and honesty should be a golden rule. If your service/product is not amazing, maybe the people using it are, or maybe the way they use it is, or maybe even the story of the brand is.

Do you know why jeans are called 'jeans'? Look it up, it has to do with Italian sailors. Do you know where the term 'Denim' comes from? Again, search it - it is related to a French port of sailing. Orr Young, founder of Young & Rubicam, wrote almost 100 years ago that "there are no boring products, only boring copywriters". If you're in doubt about what he was talking about, find the one-page print ad he wrote about a steel nail, and I rest my case.

Your story may simply be funny (but really, it has to be really funny, no easy puns) or it may simply be moving. Eat, Pray, (Laugh), Love. When you consider that the human species is the only one on the planet that will go out of its way to eat expertly cut raw fish - something any respectable bear would simply gobble up with no further ado - these four activities are so inherently human that we should often employ them in communicating with said species.

In digital video advertising, is it really hard to tell a story in the 5 seconds it takes to "Skip ads"? Yes, it is - it's nearly impossible to tell a story in 5". But if you have a good story and manage to tease-it-in properly in those 5 seconds people tend to skip the skip. Unfortunately, it often happens that digital video ads are mere adaptations of TV executions, so the storyline was just not devised thinking of the first 5 seconds, but rather of the last 5. Good digital video advertising simply needs to address this.

In summary, if your creative piece is able to draw a few drops of instant saliva, a fervent bead of adoring sweat, a couple of tears from a hearty laugh or two degrees of unexpected warming in the pectoral region of your target group, you have done your job well.

3. If you don't love Advertising, quit your job. Now.

Good creativity is incompatible with ignorance and laziness. It takes a lot of research and work to mine the interesting, the unknown, the amazing, the moving or the funny nuggets you can use from the often garbled sludge that most of today's briefing docs (if there even is one) seem to produce. But it is always worth the trouble. People view it or read it. People share it. People often shed a tear, or share a laugh, or re-post it or even (outlandishly) buy what you are trying to sell!

4. Great creative executions are useless if you can't deliver them properly

Think about something you ordered from Amazon - or any other ecommerce platform or outlet, for that matter. You wanted it, you chose it, you paid for it and, admit it, you're secretly yearning for the sound of that doorbell on the expected date. And then the bell doesn't ring, on that date or any other.

Instead, you get an email saying that "a delivery attempt was made", and you have to trek or drive down to the nearest collection point - right across town, through maddening traffic - to get your package. Sound familiar? Does it not ruin at least half of the experience?

Now imagine that you didn't want it, you most often have not chosen it, you paid for it with your precious time, and it is inconveniencing you by delaying what you'd really like right now. That's digital advertising, when it's poorly delivered.

You may have the greatest advertising campaign on earth; if it is not delivered properly to the media outlet your consumer is using, it will most probably backfire. User experience is now the motherlode of any successful campaign. The Coalition for Better Ads is a worldwide initiative that directly addresses this issue.

Coalition for Better Ads

Many campaigns have outstanding creative ideas and amazing content, yet they fail. Assuming they were well targeted, this is usually because they were not delivered properly to the consumer. It's not the content, it's the shape and form - the body as the delivery mechanism. And this conundrum is at the very roots of the Coalition for Better Ads.

Advertising helps support valuable free content, robust journalism and social connections across the internet. Consumers, however, are increasingly frustrated with ads that disrupt their experience, interrupt content and slow browsing.

Leading international trade associations and companies involved in online media formed the [Coalition for Better Ads](#) to improve consumers' experience with online advertising. The Coalition for Better Ads has leveraged consumer insights and cross-industry expertise to develop and implement new global standards, the [Better Ad Standards](#), for online advertising that address consumer expectations.

Establishing Global Standards for Digital Advertising was always the ultimate goal of the Coalition. In order to achieve this, massive and ground-breaking research was conducted using Consumer-centric methodologies. The research goal was to measure consumers' preferences about the types of ads they least prefer, in order to help the global marketplace take steps to deliver a better ad experience.

In the first phase of the Coalition's research, more than 25,000 Internet users in North America and Europe were surveyed about their preferences for different types of online ads. The research included desktop web (55 ad experiences) and mobile web (49 ad experiences). The results of the Coalition's consumer-focused research defined [Better Ads Standards](#) that identify the ad experiences that fall beneath a threshold of consumer acceptability. Better Ads Standards revealed the least preferred, most annoying ad experiences that are also most likely to cause consumers to adopt ad blockers.

The research methodology was then used to measure consumers' preferences in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The research found strong alignment of consumer preferences across countries and regions for the most- and least-preferred online ad experiences, supporting the adoption of the same Better Ads Standards for desktop and mobile web globally. To date, more than 66,000 consumers in countries representing 70% of global online advertising spending have participated in the Coalition's research for desktop and mobile web. The [research process itself is worth looking into here](#).

The Coalition plans to continue its research and test other digital advertising environments beyond desktop, mobile web, and short-form video. The [Better Ads Standards](#) as they stand should be a clear and present source of verification for both creative and production teams as they shape creative executions.

Section 8. Privacy & Consent – The Transparency & Consent Framework (TCF)

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force on 25 May 2018, revolutionised the data privacy landscape in Europe. GDPR was designed to harmonise data privacy laws across Europe, giving individuals greater control and transparency over their personal data while raising the bar for businesses to achieve lawful processing of personal information.

The [IAB Europe Transparency and Consent Framework](#) (TCF) is the only GDPR consent solution built *by* the industry *for* the industry, creating a true industry-standard approach. The TCF's simple objective is to help all parties in the digital advertising chain ensure that they comply with the EU's GDPR and ePrivacy Directive when processing personal data or accessing and/or storing information on a user's device, such as cookies, advertising identifiers, device identifiers and other tracking technologies.

The TCF creates an environment where website publishers can tell visitors what data is being collected and how their website and the companies they partner with intend to use it. The TCF gives the publishing and advertising industries a common language with which to communicate consumer consent for the delivery of relevant online advertising and content.

On 25 April 2018 the IAB Europe Transparency and Consent Framework (TCF) v1.1 was launched after an extensive industry consultation with IAB Europe and IAB Tech Lab members and the broader digital advertising industry.

On 21 August 2019 a revised version of the TCF, TCF v2.0 was launched following extensive industry consultation particularly with publishers and the industry associations who represent all aspects of the industry. On the 15th August, TCF v1.1 was deprecated and all stakeholders now work with TCF v2.0.

The Benefits of the TCF for Users

Under the TCF, not only can the user give or withhold consent, but they can also exercise their 'right to object' to data being processed on the basis of legitimate interests. It also enables greater transparency for the user, through more detailed and more easily understandable descriptions of the purposes of data processing.

Specifically, TCF v2.0 supports:

- **Transparency**- through revised definitions and descriptions of data processing purposes that combine greater granularity (now increased from 5 to 10 purposes with the addition of 2 special purposes, and 2 features and 2 special features) that will enable users to make more informed choices regarding the processing of their personal data.
- **Choice** - the introduction of signals that allow CMPs to offer users a streamlined means for users exercising the “right to object” to processing on the basis of a “legitimate interest”.
- **Accountability** - with a more complete accommodation of the “legitimate interests” legal basis for data processing that allows vendors to receive a signal about whether their legitimate interests have been disclosed. Control - with new, granular controls for publishers about the data processing purposes permitted by them on a per vendor basis.
- **Compliance** - through greater support for the users of the framework in their application of the policies, terms and conditions and technical specifications with increased investment by IAB Europe in the resource to support compliance.

Supporting the TCF

With many of the largest Vendors and CMPs in programmatic advertising, including Adobe, Axel Springer, Criteo, Google, GroupM, Integral Ad Science, MediaMath, Oracle Data Cloud, OneTrust Preference Choices, The Trade Desk, Quantcast, Xandr, and more working with the TCF v2.0. IAB Europe encourages interested stakeholders to find out more about the TCF and how they can implement the framework.

Registration for the **Global Vendor List** (GVL) is open for vendors to apply for approval to participate in the IAB Europe Transparency and Consent Framework (TCF) at the GVL Portal. Once an application is received and approved by IAB Europe, vendors will be issued with an ID and will be listed [here](#). The registration process for vendors requires adherence to TCF [Policy](#) v2.0 and to the [TCF Terms & Conditions](#) and provides transparency into how companies intend to comply with GDPR requirements, centralised into one location.

CMPs must also register to participate in the Framework and do this by applying for an annual CMP membership with the TCF through completing the CMP application process at the CMP Portal (CMP Registration). Once they have completed and passed the CMP Validation test managed by IAB Europe, they will receive an ID, sub-domain and will be listed [here](#).

Publishers can use the GVL to view the vendors who are participating in the TCF, and to determine which vendors to include in the transparency and consent user interface they make available on their website.

Publishers can also see a list on the IAB Europe website of CMPs who are approved to participate in the TCF. Publishers can then either select a CMP from the list that they would like to work or publishers can register as a CMP themselves and building their own CMP protocol. Find out more [here](#).



Section 9. Best Practices for The Industry

For Media Buyers

- Ensure you're only purchasing app(ads.txt) compliant inventory. Work with DSPs and SSPs that discard unauthorised inventory.
- Understand who is getting paid for an impression: leverage industry tools such as sellers.json and the open RTB supply-chain object to understand exactly who is getting paid or selling impressions. When doing this, make sure there are not any unknown entities, entities you're not comfortable with, or entities that are not creating value in your marketing strategy. If a partner doesn't support sellers.json and/or supply-chain object, be cautious and block if you're not 100% confident in what you're getting.
- Ensure each impression is pre-scanned for invalid / fraudulent traffic to ensure all IVT is removed from being purchased.
- Ensure your partners have controls in place to ensure ads are only placed on brand-safe content, are eliminating malware, not funding piracy, can monitor and have processes in place to account for any spoofing of inventory and comply with all local laws and regulations.
- Ensure your partners have a team dedicated to inventory quality. MRC accredited vendors provide a critical baseline level of protection, but for best results look for layered defences that include specialised expertise from the partners you work with. There are some that require the human eye or the common sense approach to investigate further when something just looks too good to be true.

For Media Sellers

- Implement app(ads.txt) files and only list partners where you can directly trace revenue from. Adding a company to your ads.txt is like handing someone the keys to your house - do not blindly add lines without knowing who they are. You can also cross-reference app(ads.txt) files with sellers.json information to understand exactly who is in the files.
- Ensure your media buyers are trustworthy and not reselling your inventory at a mark-up or mixing direct inventory with spoofed inventory to create scale and higher revenue. This can be done by working with DSPs or SSPs to understand if anyone is selling inventory you own.

- Have the consumer experience in mind, meaning do not overload pages/apps with ad units, ensure ad units have a decent chance of being viewed, do not refresh ads at an alarming rate, and ensure you're properly representing inventory as it truly is (i.e. don't say an outstream ad is in-stream, don't spoof the app/site, etc.).

A few general best practices below ensure the industry not only maintains but builds upon industry benchmarks:

- Ensure a baseline of media quality — impressions delivered are brand safe/brand suitable, fraud free and viewable in the intended geography -- and enforce that standard across all brands, campaigns and regions
- Utilise an accredited third-party vendor to measure media quality across platforms, devices and browsers
- Ensure verification vendor provides brand suitability controls in accordance with the 4A's APB and GARM
- Ensure an expanded support model to enable regionalised decision making with centralised transparency
- In programmatic environments, employ a two-pronged approach to ensure you're bidding on and investing in the highest quality media. This includes:
 - Pre-bid targeting / avoidance
 - Post-bid monitoring & blocking



Section 10. Industry Standards

The following section details other organisations which have standards to enable responsibility and quality in digital advertising.

Media Rating Council (MRC)

The Media Rating Council objectives are:

- To secure for the media industry and related users audience measurement services that are valid, reliable and effective.
- To evolve and determine minimum disclosure and ethical criteria for media audience measurement services.
- To provide and administer an audit system designed to inform users as to whether such audience measurements are conducted in conformance with the criteria and procedures developed.

Most relevant to the quality of digital advertising, are its audits in the areas of viewability and ad fraud. Find out more [here](#).

Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG)

Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) is a US based cross-industry accountability program to create transparency in the business relationships and transactions that undergird the digital ad industry, while continuing to enable innovation. A joint marketing-media industry program, TAG was created with a focus on four core areas: eliminating fraudulent digital advertising traffic, combating malware, fighting ad-supported Internet piracy to promote brand integrity, and promoting brand safety through greater transparency. TAG was created by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's), Association of National Advertisers (ANA), and Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and works collaboratively with companies throughout the digital ad supply chain.

4 core areas of work are:

- [Eliminate Fraudulent Traffic](#)
- [Combat Malware](#)
- [Fight Internet Piracy](#)
- [Promote Transparency](#)

Find out more [here](#).

WIPO Alert

[The WIPO Alert Database](#) is a secure online platform on which national authorities can upload and update their lists of copyright-infringing websites. Advertisers and advertising agencies can download these lists via an API as an aggregated feed. The service enables a global view of infringing sites, including sites in foreign languages which might otherwise be overlooked.

Access to the database will be controlled by WIPO and open to any genuine advertiser or agency which is willing to undertake to use the information solely for preventing the appearance of advertising on pirate websites. There is no charge for the service.

Find out more [here](#).

Memorandum of Understanding on Online Advertising and IPR

[The MoU on online advertising and IPR](#) is a voluntary agreement facilitated by the European Commission to limit advertising on websites and mobile applications that infringe copyright or disseminate counterfeit goods.

The MoU is a part of the Commission's 'follow the money' approach to IPR enforcement (see below). The signatories of this MoU commit to minimise the placement of advertising on websites and mobile applications that infringe copyright or disseminate counterfeit goods. This will help to curtail the revenues of these websites and apps. The signatories will work with the Commission to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the MoU on the online advertising market. The MoU, which complements similar national initiatives, will be assessed after a year, during which the signatories will meet quarterly to analyse the progress achieved.

Find out more [here](#).

Code of Practice on Disinformation

The self-regulatory [Code of Practice on Disinformation](#) is to address the spread of online disinformation and fake news.

This is the first time worldwide that industry agrees, on a voluntary basis, to self-regulatory standards to fight disinformation. The Code aims at achieving the objectives set out by the Commission's Communication presented in April 2018 by setting a wide range of commitments, from transparency in political advertising to the closure of fake accounts and demonetization of purveyors of disinformation.

The Code includes an annex identifying best practices that signatories will apply to implement the Code's commitments. Find out more [here](#).

Coalition for Better Ads (CBA)

The Coalition for Better Ads leverages consumer insights and cross-industry expertise to develop and implement new global standards, the Better Ad Standards, for online advertising that address consumer expectations. Currently, the Standards are applicable in the [Desktop and Mobile Web environments](#). Find out more [here](#).



Section 11. Industry Quality Initiatives Across Europe

One of the key objectives of IAB Europe and any National IAB is to build a sustainable future for digital advertising and marketing. This can be achieved by creating standards and frameworks to provide a set of principles and rules to encourage responsibility and quality in digital advertising.

Over the last few years there has been a surge of industry challenges from ad fraud to unsafe brand environments which has threatened the quality of digital advertising campaigns.

IAB Europe's Quality Initiative's Navigator (updated in April 2021) highlights the work being undertaken by National IABs in Europe to enable digital advertising to be delivered responsibly and to the highest quality.

[The navigator](#) provides a summary of the national level quality certification schemes plus any other guidelines or best practice guides that exist.

Suzanne McElligott, CEO, IAB Ireland and Board Member of IAB Europe comments: *"Great work has been achieved across national IABs in some of the larger markets to develop local quality certification schemes. As a consequence, there is now a great opportunity for IAB Europe to develop a framework based on these schemes and so assist all (of the other) European markets to learn from the programmes in place and to develop their own national IAB quality scheme."*



Section 12. IAB Europe Resources

The following section details relevant IAB Europe initiatives and resources designed to ensure a sustainable future for digital advertising and marketing in Europe.

Viewability Principles

These European Viewability Principles created by the European Viewability Steering Group aim to help our industry to achieve the following macro goals:

- To raise minimum quality standards in digital advertising measurement for all stakeholders across Europe.
- To measure digital ad exposure which is deemed a key step to increasing confidence in digital ad trading.
- To enhance the (internet) user experience in the context of changing user expectations.
- To improve confidence in the digital ad environment.

Find out more [here](#).

Supply Chain Transparency Guide

The aim of the [IAB Europe Supply Chain Transparency Guide](#) is to improve transparency in the digital advertising supply chain in the areas of data, cost and inventory source. The guide provides questions for each stakeholder category to be asked at different stages of the supply chain. First launched in 2018, the Guide is updated on a regular basis by IAB Europe's Programmatic Trading Committee.

Access the fourth version (March 2021) of the interactive version of the guide [here](#) or download the PDF version [here](#). Read more about the release of the latest version in our blog post [here](#).

Quality Blog Series

In this blog series, IAB Europe's Brand Advertising Committee and its members explore key perspectives and the latest developments in the drive for a viewable, quality digital advertising environment. The blogs are:

- [What does viewability mean for a mobile world?](#) - Alex North, Facebook
- [What is Quality Media and Why is it Important?](#) - Stevan Randjelovic, GroupM
- [How Open Measurement Unlocks Scale](#) – Nick Morley, Integral Ad Science

IAB Europe Guide to Brand Safety & Brand Suitability

In July 2020, IAB Europe launched this Guide to share background context on brand safety in Europe, pan-European definitions for brand safety and brand suitability with accompanying key considerations, best practices and case studies to help educate all stakeholders on ensuring brand safe environments.

With the introduction of brand suitability in the last couple of years, the guide also provides an overview of how this can complement and enhance brand safety tools to ensure a more relevant content environment for brands.

Access the guide [here](#).

IAB Europe's Guide to Ad Fraud

In December 2020, IAB Europe released its 'Guide to Ad Fraud', to help drive media quality and effectiveness in the digital advertising industry.

It defines specific types of fraud in digital advertising and outlines how verification companies work to combat new and emerging types of ad fraud across all channels.

It also provides top tips for buyers and planners to prevent Ad Fraud in their next campaigns and serves as a call for action to the industry to follow best practices to tackle ad fraud.

Access the guide [here](#).

GDPR Guidance: Legitimate Interests Assessments (LIA) for Digital Advertising

IAB Europe works to produce relevant guidance on the implementation of EU privacy and data protection rules applicable in the digital advertising sector.

In March 2021, our Legal Committee developed this practical GDPR Guide on legitimate interests assessments (LIAs) in collaboration with IAB UK.

Access the guide [here](#).

Section 13. Summary

Quality is something that all stakeholders have to strive for. Every player within the supply chain is accountable and responsible for the reputation of digital advertising.

As summarised in this Guide, there are various components to quality, and the priority of these will vary depending on the advertiser; viewability, brand safety and suitability, ad fraud, campaign creativity and in-geo. This Guide provides practical advice for each of these areas.

In summary, it is important that before thinking about specific performance KPIs, brands create a baseline of quality. This includes developing a strategy – like establishing viewability baselines, brand suitable categories or in-geo parameters, operationalising them through campaign execution and making necessary optimisation adjustments. Once this baseline is created, brands can be assured they're delivering campaigns that have the quality to resonate well with audiences and deliver on their KPIs. For publishers, quality is just as important since it is a key differentiator in an increasingly commoditised market.

Company standards, industry initiatives, collaboration, testing and learning is key to continuing to uphold quality within our industry.





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