

COLUMNS

## Growing concerns over ad viewability: 3 reasons brands should go in-app

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Citing concerns over viewability, Kellogg in June cut its spend on video ads running on major publishers such as Facebook and YouTube. It marked yet another instance of brands rejecting traditional online advertising methods over not knowing who if anyone is seeing their ads.

This move comes despite Google announcing a 91 percent viewability rate on YouTube video ads, a marked improvement in the 46 percent viewability rate on commercials run elsewhere. This claim does come with its share of detractors, though, as Google does not allow brands to use third-party viewability services to track and verify campaigns.

With Kellogg's pullout, it appears brands are reluctant to take the search engine giant at its word.

The problem of ad visibility is not just relegated to video, either.

According to the recent report by Google, an estimated 56 percent of banner ads, the most pervasive form of online advertising, go unseen.

Google claimed that this new insight came from "the advancement of new technologies," making it reasonable to assume that viewability has always been an underlining problem, but the scope has only recently been realized.

Mobile is different

When it comes to mobile, the assumption is that viewability issues are similar to those of the desktop.

It is likely that ads served on the mobile Web run the risk of going unseen at more or less the same rates as those run on a desktop browser, but dismissing mobile entirely over reservations about the mobile Web is ignoring a huge component of what makes mobile, well, mobile.

Of the 117 and growing minutes spent per day on mobile devices, 86 percent, or more than an hour and a half, is in applications not the mobile Web.

With a very miniscule exception, apps need to be launched by a person, ensuring that virtually all in-app ads are shown to live human beings. And unlike the desktop browser where ads running below the fold run the risk of never being seen, all in-app ads, be they video, banner, or any other form, are served on the visible screen.

All of this together means that you can virtually guarantee a high rate of visibility on mobile in-app. And it is why industry claims of complete in-app ad viewability are nothing to write home about.

Reducing fraud risk

Like most things in digital marketing, successful viewability is not as cut and dry as whether or not a consumer viewed an ad. We must also consider fraud.

Viewability fraud can occur a few main ways, such as through the use of ghost sites where humans and bots drive traffic to fake Web sites to generate ad impressions, or ad stacking, where multiple ads are stacked on top of one another with only the top ad visible.

There are, of course, other ways to deceive, but the point remains that viewability fraud is highly prevalent among desktop advertising. This is not the case on mobile.

First, there simply are not any cost-effective means in which to commit viewability fraud on mobile.

Bots can perform the action of launching an app, but doing so requires the building of fake mobile IDs used to track users in mobile advertising. That is a cumbersome process, and even if done, any well-run marketing campaign limits impressions per user anyways, effectively rendering any falsified IDs quickly useless.

Fraud on the mobile Web is possible much as the same way it is on the desktop, but again, the mobile Web occupies such a little amount of total mobile consumption when compared to apps, that any fraudster, whose primary concern is finding the highest return with the least amount of resistance, would find it not worth its time.

Second, most mobile advertising is performance-based and built around optimizing to the best performing sources, so any fraudulent and therefore poorly performing traffic source would quickly be removed from a mobile campaign.

Impressions may be high, but if the clicks, installs, or purchases are not there, then it is not worthwhile. Fraud prevention is a byproduct of an effective mobile campaign.

Getting started is easy

Last year, mobile Internet usage surpassed desktop usage for the first time, marking, as one publication put it, "the biggest shift since the Internet began." It is a gap that is only expected to widen, and as such, brands would be best served shifting a portion of their media spend to mobile.

Not only is its' ubiquity increasing daily, but as we have covered, viewability concerns are virtually non-existent.

Built on data-driven personas that connect brands to precisely the right audiences, an effective mobile strategy can help ensure customers not only see an ad but are also more likely to interact with it.

BRANDS INTERESTED in pursuing a mobile strategy can either use their own data such as customer email addresses and desktop Web site visitors, established mobile personas and mobile data stores, or a combination of both to reach interested consumers in a much more nuanced, and targeted way than possible on than desktop.

From there, brands can easily and automatically optimize around the best performing sources, allocating spend to the channels that prove most effective in building a sustained mobile presence and driving actions.

Mobile is the future one customers are guaranteed to see.

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