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The Coalition for Better Ad Standards roll out in NZ

Introduction

In order to improve the consumer experience, leading international trade associations and companies in the online media ecosystem have joined forces to create the Coalition for Better Ads. (CBA)

The Coalition has developed an initial set of data-driven standards for online advertising based on 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.

CBA rolled out the standards across the US and Europe in February this year and word from IAB Europe is that mainstream publishers were prepared for the change and most have complied without too much disruption to their respective businesses.

While the Standards currently apply only in Europe and North America, we expect the CBA to roll out the standards to New Zealand this year and local publishers should familiarise themselves with the [12 ad experiences](#) they need to avoid.

IABNZ is an affiliate member of the Coalition and as such we recognise and support the Better Ads Standards. The Standards are in line with the IAB's LEAN principle which is a concise guide to help publishers improve the user experience and we urge publishers to adopt the LEAN and the CBA standards

Coalition members include most of the large global brands, agencies and media business including Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Unilever, Group M and Proctor & Gamble

Google Chrome supports CBA

In support of the Coalition's move and to further encourage the implementation of the new standards, Google Chrome has announced it will filter (block) all ads on sites (not just the offending ads) that have repeat and significant violation of the Better Ads Standards. This was effective as of February 15 in the US and Europe.

We anticipate Google Chrome will extend ad filtering to New Zealand sometime this year and we recommend publishers work towards meeting the Standards as quickly as possible to ensure they are doing their part to improve the user experience and to avoid the affect the Chrome initiative could potentially have on their revenue.

CBA White Paper

In April, IABNZ formed a CBA Working Group comprising of Karen Greaves, Product Delivery Manager, Trade Me Advertising; Joseph Patchett, Online Solutions Manager, TVNZ; Andy Wylie, Head of Digital Advertising Operations, NZME.

The group has compiled the following paper which describes non-compliant ad formats from a New Zealand perspective and what steps Publishers should take to avoid being negatively affected by the implementation of the new format guidelines

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The Coalition for Better Ad Standards - IABNZ White Paper

Mobile Ads

Ad Density Higher Than 30%

Ads that take up more than 30% of the vertical height of a page. Ad density is determined by summing the heights of all ads within the main content portion of a mobile page, then dividing by the total height of the main content portion of the page.

For the purposes of this ad experience definition:

- Ad density is measured against the main content portion of the page, not the viewport. The viewport is a users visible area of a webpage. The main content portion of the page includes visible content and content below the fold.
- The main content portion of the page excludes headers, footers and site navigation including related articles
- Ads below the main content portion of the page are not included in the density calculation.
- All ad formats count toward ad density, including “sticky” ads and inline ads. The height of each “sticky” ad is counted once for the purposes of this calculation)
 - Width of ad not considered in this measurement.





Header/site navigation
(Not included in measurement)

Main Content Portion

Advertisement

Footer
(Not included in measurement)



Header/site navigation
(Not included in measurement)

Main Content Portion

Advertisement

Content below the fold



Header/site navigation
(Not included in measurement)

Main Content Portion

Advertisement

Related Articles/Footer
(Not included in measurement)



Header/site navigation
(Not included in measurement)

Advertisement

Main Content Portion

Advertisement

Content below the fold

Flashing Animated Ads

Ads that animate and “flash” with rapidly changing background, text or colors are highly aggravating for consumers, and serve to create a severe distraction for them as they attempt to read the content on a given page.

Animations that do not “flash” did not fall beneath the initial Better Ads Standard.

Flashing definition (from TVNZ media ops team):

A “flash” is an image that is up for 9 frames or less with a change in colour level that affects 95% of the image.

Eg. A shot of a car for 20 frames, into a shot of a tree for 9 frames, into a building for 9 frames, and then back to someone talking for 5 seconds would class as flashing images. But a black screen with the word car as text, into the word tree as text etc etc wouldn't, as the change is only a small one in that case.



Pop-up Ads

Pop-up ads are a type of interstitial ads that do exactly what they say — pop up and block the main content of the page. They appear after content on the page begins to load and are among the most commonly cited annoyances for visitors to a website.

Pop-up ads come in many varieties – they can take up part of the screen, or the entire screen.

Included ad experiences tested: Pop-up ad with countdown, Pop-up ad without countdown (tested with 2 variations in design)



Prestitial Ads

Mobile prestitial ads appear on a mobile page before content has loaded, blocking the user from continuing on to the content they have sought out. These pop-ups vary in size from full-screen to part of the screen. They may also appear as a standalone page that prevents users from getting to the main content.

Included ad experiences tested: Prestitial ad with countdown, Prestitial ad without countdown.



Auto-playing Video Ads with Sound

Ads with videos that start playing without any interaction from the user and play sound.

This ad experience is especially disruptive because it catches users off guard and often compels them to quickly close the window or tab in order to stop the sound — especially if they are on their mobile device and in a public place, where such noise can be a public nuisance and personal embarrassment.

Ads that autoplay without sound are acceptable and so are ads that require a click to activate the sound.

Video ads with sound that play as part of pre-roll or mid-roll video content have not yet been tested, but likely the same standards will apply. i.e. if the user has to click to start the video or sound that is acceptable.



Postitial Ads with Countdown

Postitial ads with countdown timers appear after the user follows a link. These ads force the user to wait a number of seconds before they can dismiss the ad, or for the ad to close or redirect them to another page.

These ads frustrate users by breaking the flow of content in a manner that can prove distracting — if a user is trying to navigate from one page to another, only to be delayed by this ad, they might abandon the page entirely.

Postitial ads with countdowns that can be dismissed immediately are acceptable as they don't break the user flow.



Full-screen Scrollover Ad

Full-Screen Scrollover ads force a user to scroll through an ad that appears on top of content. These ads take up more than 30% of the page and float on top of the page's main content, obstructing it from view. The result can be disorienting for users, as it obscures the content a consumer is attempting to browse.

These are different from popup ads as users need to scroll to dismiss them, rather than click.

Ads that appear in-line, do not obscure other content and smoothly scroll out of sight are acceptable.



Large Sticky Ads

Sticky Ads stick to a side of a mobile page (usually the bottom or top of the screen), regardless of a user's scrolling. If these static, immobile sticky ads takes up more than 30% of the screen's real estate, they are considered large sticky ads and are not acceptable.

A Large Sticky Ad's positioning disrupts and obscures a page's main content — unavoidably leading to a negative user experience.

Sticky ads that cover less than 30% of the screen's real estate are considered acceptable.



Desktop Ads

Pop-up Ads

Pop-up ads are a type of interstitial ad that do exactly what they say — pop up and block the main content of the page. They appear after content on the page begins to load and are among the most commonly cited annoyances for visitors to a website. Pop-up ads come in many varieties – they can take up part of the screen, or the entire screen.

Included ad experiences tested: Pop-up Ad with Countdown, Pop-up Ad without Countdown



Auto-playing Video Ads with Sound

Auto-playing video ads play sound without any user interaction.

These experiences are especially disruptive to users, as they catch the readers off guard, and often compel them to quickly close the window or tab in order to stop the sound. Ads that require a click to activate sound did not fall beneath the initial Better Ads Standard.

The Better Ads Methodology has not yet tested video ads that appear before (“pre-roll”) or during (“mid-roll”) video content that is relevant to the content of the page itself.

Included ad experiences tested: Auto-playing in-line video with sound

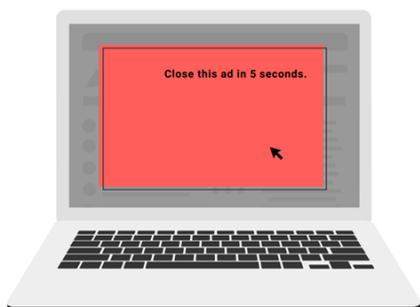


Prestitial Ads with Countdown

Prestitial “Countdown” ads appear before the content of the page has loaded, forcing the user to wait a number of seconds before they can dismiss the ad, or the ad closes on its own.

These ads can disrupt users in a way that dissuades them from waiting for the countdown to finish and continuing onto their content.

In desktop environments, prestitial ads that can be dismissed immediately did not fall beneath the initial Better Ads Standard for desktop.



Large Sticky Ads

Large Sticky Ads stick to the bottom edge of a page, regardless of a user's efforts to scroll. As the user browses the page, this static, immobile sticky ad takes up more than 30% of the screen's real estate.

A Large Sticky Ad has an impeding effect by continuing to obstruct a portion of the page view regardless of where the user moves on the page.



NEXT STEPS FOR PUBLISHERS

- Publishers should review all ad formats currently used versus the CBA guidelines as outlined above and/or from the <https://www.betterads.org/>
- Publishers should familiarise themselves with the Google Ad Experience report (found under Webmaster tools) and Google Audit and review process. <https://support.google.com/webtools/answer/7072706?hl=en>
- Publishers should refer to Google Ad Experience Help Forum for more information and discussion. <https://productforums.google.com/forum/#!forum/ad-experience-report>
- Find out more about the better Ads Experience Program. <https://www.betterads.org/program/>

ROLL OUT IN NEW ZEALAND

IABNZ is waiting for confirmation of a roll out date from CBA in the US and we will notify members of this as soon as possible. Nevertheless, NZ publishers should be prepared for this to occur this year.

Thank you to our contributors:

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