Spotlight on

Viewability

December 2016

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1. What is Viewability?

Viewability = the Potential to be seen
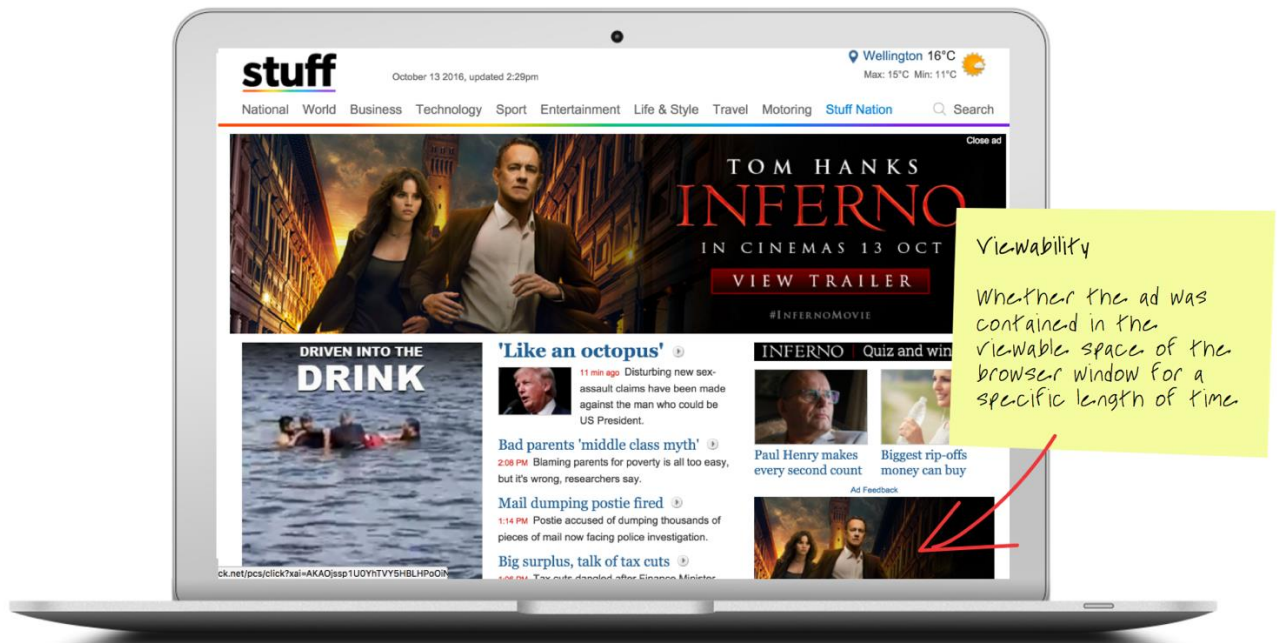
Shift from a "served impression" to a "viewable" impression

Image credit: Ybrand New Zealand

2. Why are we discussing viewability of digital advertisements?

The topic of viewability of digital advertising and video has originated because of a number of factors. For example:

1. Advertisements appearing below the fold may be 'served' and therefore the advertiser is paying for that advertisement impression, however, the likelihood of a person/user scrolling down the page and viewing the advertisement is low.

2. The concern about non-human traffic and advertisement fraud – the ad impression is reported, and the advertiser paid, but did it actually get seen by a human?

3. The rise in use of ad blocking software. In most cases, if an advertisement is blocked by the user, no ad impression is served and no payment for that impression is exchanged between the advertiser and the publisher. However, some ad blockers could disrupt ad serving but still initiate the count of an impression. (Some ad blockers block the ad call, some do not). For more information on Advertisement Blocking please refer to the IAB NZ Ad Blocking Toolkit.

4. Other reasons why an advertisement is not seen include

   - The viewer clicks away before the advertisement is loaded.
   - The viewer minimises the browser.
   - The viewer opens another browser tab.
   - Multiple advertisements may appear on the viewable area of the user's screen at the same time and there no way to tell which advertisement was seen. Unlike the previous three points, this can't be addressed by technology.

The wider industry agrees that the ultimate goal is to have 100% viewability, and there is a push for the industry to move towards viewability as a trading currency.

Here we will discuss the current considerations surrounding this, and the recommended approach to incorporating viewability metrics.

It should be noted that this is an ongoing discussion as consumers embrace device proliferation, and the viewability measurement technology evolves.

It is important to consider that the challenge of advertisements being viewable is shared across most advertising channels such as television, newspaper, magazine, outdoor and radio.

3. How is viewability measured?

Viewability is measured from one of two places: the advertiser's (agency) ad server or the publisher's ad server, and often both using different technologies.

Many ad serving tech vendors now have built in viewability measurement capability. In addition, there are a number of third party technology vendors that specialise in viewability measurement, and integrate with the advertiser (agency) ad server or the publisher ad server.

Viewable Impression measurement generally relies on 'tags' placed on the web pages or in the third-party ad servers. When rendered, the tag employs a "Correlator" (a linear correlation control.) The advertisement space is then "marked up," an "ad request" (server log impression) is recorded, and the Correlator begins communicating with the web page, browser and ad unit (ad space) embedded in the webpage content.

Once any portion of the ad unit (definable), on a viewer's in-view web page appears within the visible area of the browser window, data is recorded.

The Correlator continues to monitor the ad space and its relation to the browser window dimensions, considering numerous things such as:

- If the viewer has scrolled the advertisement space in or out of the visible area of the browser window.
- How long the advertisement was viewed.
- If the user minimized the window or tabbed away.
- Possible suspicious behaviour that would indicate non-human traffic.

When 50%, (or other pre-defined area) of the advertisement content on a web page is within the visible area of the viewer's browser window for one second (or two seconds if a video advertisement), a message is sent via the Correlator and a "Viewable Impression" is reported.

To see an illustration of how viewability measurement works in real time, Google helps demonstrate it here:

Display demo

Video demo

Each implementation confronts limitations that affect measurement, which in turn, affect the reported viewability and measurement rates.

Not all impressions are currently able to be effectively measured. For example, mobile apps require the application publisher to implement the SDK (software development kit) of the viewability measurement vendor before impressions can be measured. With an increasing number of applications across the ecosystem and no clear viewability measurement vendor leader, this will take time to play out.

In the case of video, measurement is limited to VPAID (Video Player-Ad Interface Definition) compliant advertisements, which currently excludes a large portion of VAST (Video Ad Serving Template) only advertisements. Publishers are working to include VPAID compliant video players throughout their ecosystems, but again, this is taking time to evolve.

Viewability measurement can lead to, or be affected by latency, where either the advertisement does not render or the data that is passed back is not correctly recorded

In summary, there is inconsistency in counting methodologies between viewability vendors. This creates discrepancies and it is not uncommon for buyers' and publishers' measurement vendors to arrive at different estimates of viewability.

4. What is the definition of a view?

According to the IAB US and MRC (Media Rating Council):

Pixel Requirement: Greater than or equal to 50% of the pixels in the advertisement were on an in-focus browser tab on the viewable space of the browser page.

Time Requirement: The time the pixel requirement is met was greater than or equal to one continuous second, post advertisement render (or two seconds in the case of video).

In simple terms:

Standard Display: 50% of pixels must be viewable + 1 second of page duration

Large Display: 30% of pixels must of viewable + 1 second of page duration

Video: 50% of pixels must viewable + 2 seconds of page duration

5. Which measurement vendors are present in the NZ market?

Vendor	Publisher (sell side) or Agency (buy side)	Accreditation Status	Viewability capabilities					
			Technology approach	Ad Placement	Site Content	Geotargeting	Competitive Separation	Fraud Detection
MOAT	Both	Accredited December 2013	Page Geomoetry/Browser Optimisation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Integral Ad Science	Both	Accredited December 2013	Page Geomoetry/Browser Optimisation	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited (US/Non US level only)	N/A	Accredited
ComScore	Both	Accredited July 2012	Page Geomoetry/Browser Optimisation	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited (US/Non US level only)	Not offered	Accredited
Google Active View (DFP)	Publisher	Accredited April 2013	Page Geometry	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sizmek	Agency	Accredited December 2013	Page Geometry/Browser Optimisation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
DoubleVerify	Both	Accredited February 2013	Page Geometry	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited (US/Non US level only)	Accredited	Accredited

*Source: MRC Desktop Viewability Status – Display Summary

6. A New Zealand snapshot

Example viewability measurement - NZ display impressions:

Number of impressions analysed	240,000,000
Human & In-View impressions Identified	45.84%
IVT % (Invalid Traffic)	1.46% (automated browsers – 0.05%, incongruous browsers – 0.39%, data center traffic – 0.36%, spider – 0.16%, invalid proxy – 1.06%)

*Measured using MOAT; period Jan-November 2016; display impressions across a variety of publishers and inventory vendors.

Example viewability measurement – NZ display impressions by creative size:

This clearly illustrates how larger advertisement units, such as the 160x600 and 300x600, that naturally remain on the screen longer during scrolling, produce higher viewability stats.

Creative Size	In-View Rate % (MRC standard)
160x600	77%
300x250	44%
300x600	64%
468x60	39%
970x250	56%
728x90	40%

*Data from July 2016

Example viewability measurement – NZ display impressions - inventory vendor comparison:

Inventory vendor/ Publisher	Impressions Analysed (unfiltered)	Impressions Analysed (filtered for General invalid traffic)	Impressions Analysed	In-View Measurable Impressions (number of impressions where viewability was measured)	In-View Measurable %	In-View Impressions	In-View %
Vendor 1	2,508,027	2,507,533	2,503,374	1,941,607	77.56%	969,991	49.96%
Vendor 2	725,194	724,921	722,262	618,510	85.64%	332,003	53.68%
Vendor 3	254,088	253,205	252,588	237,380	93.98%	122,411	51.57%

*Data from July 2016

Thank you to Ikon and Acquire Online for sharing the above examples.

7. Conclusion & Recommendation

Viewability refers to advertisements that render on the screen, in other words, advertisements that can be seen.

It is generally accepted at this stage that 100 per cent viewability is not practical.

It is also acknowledged at this time that one can't guarantee that an advertisement will be seen by a human.

Not all advertisements can be measured at this time.

However, viewability is now a key optimisation metric that should be considered by every publisher and advertiser.

The IAB/MRC standards are simply a practical guide to advertisers and agencies specifying the minimum obligation.

At this stage viewability is not mandatory.

A number of advertisers and their media agencies, have agreed on their own requirements, for example, stating that they require at least 70 per cent or 80 per cent of a display advertisement to be seen for at least five seconds.

As the industry moves towards viewability as a trading currency, there are some considerations from a publisher and advertiser perspective.

In particular, focusing solely on viewability is not recommended. Rather, viewability should be one of a range of optimisation metrics that makes sense for the advertiser.

It should be stressed that viewability is not about advertisement effectiveness or engagement.

If the client is focused on outcomes on their website such as sales, new customer sign ups, and other direct response ROI outcomes, then viewability as a metric is not as relevant as conversion optimisation, and understanding how to drive the most cost effective traffic.

Where the client objectives are more brand focused such as reach and frequency, engagement and attention on the campaign messages, then viewability as a metric becomes relevant.

It's important to remember that varying advertisement experiences will perform differently. For example, intrusive advertisements may succeed in landing good viewability metrics, but they are not always as successful from a brand perspective.

For publishers', yield and pricing can also be a challenge. If a publisher reduces the number of ad units above the fold and increases the size of the advertisement units to increase viewability, it follows that these advertisements will be more valuable. For advertisers it's important to understand that this may be necessary to pay more for highly viewable placements.

Every client is different. It is important to discuss campaign KPIs and determine which metrics they want to prioritise.

8. Useful Links

DoubleClick for Publishers – Viewability best practices

IAB US – Primer for Publishers on improving advertisement viewability (PDF)

MRC – Media Rating Council News

MOAT

Integral Advertisement Science

ComScore

Google Active View

Sizmek

DoubleVerify

IAB NZ Viewabilty Debate

IAB NZ will host an industry panel discussion on the topic of viewability, 9th February 2017

9. About IABNZ – www.iab.org.nz

Purpose:

IABNZ empowers NZ's media and marketing industries to thrive in the digital economy, promoting growth and best practice for advertisers, agencies and media owners.

Our purpose supports: Traditional Media Players, Pure Play Digital Media Owners, Agencies and Advertisers – by supporting and collaborating in areas of: transitioning to digital, education & training, standards & guidelines, research, best practice, revenue growth

Standards & Guidelines Council

Chair: Toni Knowles	VeNA
Vice Chair: Peter Henning	Mediaworks
Jeremy Hansen	TVNZ
Judit Maireder	Ybrand
Stuart Larsen	Mi9
Jono Zhang	Fairfax
Zane Furtado	Acquire Online
Maan Hammodat	NZME
Mark Banbrook	Bauer Media

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