

# Display Ads' Dubious In-View Performance

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Inventory bought via networks, exchanges most at risk

Are media buyers really spending half of their display ad budgets on wasted impressions?

According to second quarter findings from AdSafe Media, perhaps.

The ad verification service provider found that less than half of the ads worldwide purchased on ad exchanges, networks and publisher sites that passed through its system were in-view.

Ads bought direct from publisher sites were in view the greatest percentage of the time. AdSafe Media defined in-view impressions as any impression that had 50% or more of the ad unit visible for one second or more. Note that after 15 seconds, just 21.1% of all publisher impressions were considered in view, compared to about 16% of ad network and exchange-purchased inventory.

Like similar studies before it, AdSafe Media found select ad unit sizes were more visible than others. The most vertical ad units, wide skyscrapers (160 x 600), saw the greatest number of in-view impressions, followed by the common medium rectangle (250 x 300) and finally, leaderboards (728 x 90).

These in-view percentages were lower than comScore's December 2011 data that showed leaderboards, medium rectangles and wide skyscrapers in view 74%, 69% and 66% of the time, respectively.

Publisher size could account for some of the discrepancy. comScore noted 77% of US display ads served on the top 50 sites were in view compared to 61% of ads served on the remaining 501+ sites, which are common sources of inventory on ad networks and exchanges.

Purchasing inventory via these sources also proved a less brand-safe investment than buying direct from publisher sites. In Q2 2012, ad networks saw the greatest share of moderate-to-very-high ad risk (7.3%) compared to ad exchanges (5.9%) and publisher sites (5.4%). Brand risk included ad placements alongside content portraying drugs, alcohol, profanity and adult content.

The study also showed about 6-7% of all ads bought from ad networks, publishers and exchanges were served alongside a brand's other display ads, resulting in multiple ads per page. AdSafe Media estimated such duplication could cost brands as much as \$70,000 on a \$1 million ad buy.

Though more programmatic forms of display ad buying typically done across ad exchanges and networks offer advertisers greater cost-efficiency and audience targeting precision, brands must be careful to ensure the ads they buy are in fact resulting in viewable, valuable impressions.

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