Interactive Audience Measurement and Advertising Campaign Reporting and Audit Guidelines

September 2004, Version 6.0b

United States Version

Background

Consistent and accurate measurement of Internet advertising is critical for acceptance of the Internet and is an important factor in the growth of Internet advertising spending.

This document establishes a detailed definition for ad-impressions, which is a critical component of Internet measurement and provides certain guidelines for Internet advertising sellers (herein referred to as "media companies" or "sites") and ad serving organizations (including third-party ad servers and organizations that serve their own ads) for establishing consistent and accurate measurements.

Additionally, this document is intended to provide information to users of Internet measurements on the origin of key metrics, a roadmap for evaluating the quality of procedures applied by media companies and/or ad serving organizations, and certain other definitions of Internet measurement metrics, which are in various stages of discussions (Appendix B).

The definitions included in this document and the applicable project efforts resulted from requests from the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) and other members of the buying community, who asked for establishment of consistent counting methods and definitions and for improvement in overall counting accuracy. The definitions and guidelines contained in this document originated from a two-phase project led by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and facilitated by the Media Rating Council (MRC), with the participation of the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF), as a result of these requests. Phase 1 was conducted from May through December 2001, and Phase 2, which resulted in the current Version 2.0, was conducted during 2003 and 2004. Both phases are described in more detail below.

FAST Definitions (dated September 3, 1999; FAST was an organization formed by Procter & Gamble and the media industry to address Internet measurement issues several years ago which is no longer active) were considered in preparation of this document. The original FAST language was maintained wherever possible.

Definitions of terms used in this document can be found in the IAB's Glossary of Interactive Terms.

The IAB's Ad Campaign Measurement Project

In May 2001 the IAB initiated a project intended to determine the comparability of online advertising measurement data provided by a group of Internet organizations. The MRC, ABC Interactive, and the ARF also participated in the project, with the MRC initially designing the project approach and acting as facilitator of many of the project discussions.

The project had two important phases:

1. Identification and Categorization of measurement methods used by the project participants, and

2. Analysis of the numeric differences in counts arising from certain measurement options for Ad Impressions, as well as the numeric differences between client and server-initiated counting of Ad Impressions.

Information gathered in both phases was used to create the measurement metric definitions and other guidelines contained herein.

The IAB, MRC and ARF, in subsequent phases of this project, plan to further refine the counting metrics beyond Ad Impressions – i.e., Clicks, Page Impressions, Unique Visitors and Browsers, and other emerging media delivery vehicles – which are included in Appendix B of this document. Additionally, when the follow-up phases of this project are executed (for example, the next phase

"Clicks" will be initiated later in 2004), the project participants plan to re-assess the applicability of the ad-impression guidance contained herein and make such modifications as new technology or methodology may dictate.

Phase 1 – Establishment of Initial Guidelines and Metrics

The IAB commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) to perform the testing and data gathering required by Phase 1 of the project, which included identifying common measurement metrics, definitions and reporting practices, as well as highlighting areas of measurement diversity among the project participants. Additionally, PwC prepared a report (available to the IAB, MRC, ARF and project participants) that aggregated the findings, identified common trends and metrics and proposed an initial draft of a common set of industry definitions for several of the project metrics.

PwC's report was used as a basis for later participant discussions and in deriving the definitions and guidelines contained herein. Ten Internet organizations were chosen by the IAB and requested to participate in the project as follows:

- Three Ad Networks or Ad Serving Organizations
- Four Destination Sites
- Four Portal Sites

The following organizations participated in the project: AOL, Avenue A, CNET Networks Inc., Walt Disney Internet Group, DoubleClick, Forbes.net, MSN, New York Times Digital, Terra Lycos and Yahoo!

When combined, the participants' ad revenues represent nearly two-thirds of total industry revenue.

All of the participating organizations supplied information to PwC on their measurement criteria and practices and cooperated in necessary interviews and testing used as the basis for PwC's report.

PwC's procedures included: (1) interviews with employees of participating organizations, (2) reviews of policies, definitions and procedures of each participating organization, (3) execution of scripted testing to assess the collection and reporting systems of the participating organizations, and (4) analyses of results for differences and for the purpose of suggesting consistent definitions.

Phase 2 – Refinement of Guidelines and Specific Ad Impression Counting Guideline

Phase 2 of the project included data analysis and discussion between extensive groups of participants including: (1) the Phase 1 team (now called the "Measurement Task Force" of the IAB), (2) additional ad-serving organizations, and (3) the MRC. The project team for phase 2 did not include ABC Interactive or PwC.

Additionally, the Interactive Committee of the American Association of Advertising Agencies was provided with updates and periodic status checks to assure that project directions and findings were consistent with the expectations of the buying marketplace.

Certain analyses were performed by ImServices, which were used in the assessment of changes proposed to filtration guidelines.

Project Participants

International Ad Servers

AdTech (Germany)
ALLYES (China)
Aufeminin (France)
CheckM8 (US/UK/Israel)
Cossette/Fjord Interactive (Canada)
Falk AG (Germany)
JNJ Interactive (Korea)
Iprom (Slovenia)
Predicta (Brazil)

Other Participants

ABCE/IFABC (Europe)
Advertising Research Foundation (U.S.)
Amer. Assoc. of Ad Agencies (U.S.)
Association of National Advertisers (U.S.)
EACA (Europe)
EIAA (Europe)
ESOMAR (Europe)
IAB Argentina
IAB Europe
IM Services (U.S.)
Interactive Media Association (Brazil)
Media Rating Council (U.S.)
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
JIAA (Japan)

U.S. (* = non-publisher)

24/7 Real Media
About.com
Accipiter*
Advertising.com
AOL
Atlas DMT*
BlueStreak *
CentrPort*
CheckM8*
CNET Networks
Disney Internet Group
DoubleClick*
Fastclick
Falk North America*
Focus Interactive/Excite Network
Forbes.com
Google
I/PRO*
Klipmart*
MSN
NY Times Digital
Overture
Poindexter Systems*
Red Sheriff*/Nielsen NetRatings
Value Click
Weather Channel Interactive
Yahoo!
Zedo.com*

Scope and Applicability

These guidelines are intended to cover on-line browser or browser-equivalent based Internet activity.

Wireless, off-line cached media and Interactive-based television were not addressed in these guidelines due to differences in infrastructure and/or delivery method. Additionally, newer extended metrics that are just beginning to be captured by media companies; such as "flash tracking," or flash sites are not addressed in this document and will be addressed at a later time.

This document is principally applicable to Internet media companies and ad-serving organizations and is intended as a guide to accepted practice, as developed by the IAB, MRC and ARF. Additionally, Internet planners and buyers can use this document to assist in determining the quality of measurements.

Contents

This document contains the following sections:

1. Measurement Definitions

The following presents the guidance for "Ad Impression" counting resulting from Phase 2 of the Project, which is considered finalized:

Ad Impression – A measurement of responses from an ad delivery system to an ad request from the user's browser, which is filtered from robotic activity and is recorded at a point as late as possible in the process of delivery of the creative material to the user's browser — therefore closest to actual opportunity to see by the user (see specifics below).

Two methods are used to deliver ad content to the user – server-initiated and client-initiated. Server initiated ad counting uses the site's web content server for making requests, formatting and re-directing content. Client-initiated ad counting relies on the user's browser to perform these activities (in this case the term "client" refers to an Internet user's browser).

This Guideline requires ad counting to use a client-initiated approach; server-initiated ad counting methods (the configuration in which ad impressions are counted at the same time the underlying page content is served) are not acceptable for counting ad impressions because they are the furthest away from the user actually seeing the ad.

The following details are key components of the Guideline:

1. A valid ad impression may only be counted when an ad counter receives and responds to an HTTP request for a tracking asset from a client. The count must happen after the initiation of retrieval of underlying page content. Permissible implementation techniques include (but are not limited to) HTTP requests generated by <IMG>, <IFRAME>, or <SCRIPT SRC>. For client-side ad serving, the ad content itself could be treated as the tracking asset and

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