Striking the balance between viewability and user experience

It's not new to say that the advertising industry has made a monumental shift towards putting viewability at the forefront of campaign goals, however, the impact on user experience is increasingly being called into play.

Striking the Balance Between Viewability and User

A growing concern is that some advertisers are focusing too much on pursuing the former, to the extent that it is having a negative impact on the overall experience of the user.

In addition to this, some leading news publications are redesigning their sites to be 100% viewable. These sites, that focus on in-view ad percentages, are ignoring both the consumer and the effectiveness of each ad individually. Web page layouts prioritise ad banners rather than the content featured, but at what cost to the overall user experience when visiting that particular site?

With this in mind, publishers need to ensure that they are presenting online ads in a format that can remain viewable, without being intrusive to the audience. They need to be prepared to maximise better practices to accommodate their desire for viewable impressions.

The increased focus on delivering viewable ads results in agencies supplying publishers with ads taking up ever greater file sizes. Not only do these data consuming ads slow down a user's experience, their performance on mobile devices also proves challenging as the size of these heavily loading ads result in them not having adaptability. With the increasing shift of consumers using their mobile devices as computers, this inconsistency is surely having an impact.

User-initiated ads

So how does the industry tackle address this balance? Viewability is a big enough challenge on its own, but disruptive ads are not the answer to achieving a 100% viewable goal. User initiation has a massive part to play; if a user chooses to actively engage with an ad, by initiating it to load or expand, then advertisers can confirm that that ad is viewable. Brands need to shift their focus from grabbing the interest of their audience immediately, to enticing further interaction. If a brand

can achieve this, it doesn't matter where their ad appears on the publisher page, that user initiating will deem it viewable. User-initiated ads are the key to achieving viewable impressions with a good user experience at the heart of it.

In order to address this, brands need to think of ways to achieve viewable impressions without compromising the user experience. With the evolution of programmatic advertising, it's easier than ever to produce a series of creative ads delivered to targeted individuals across multiple devices. Using programmatic techniques, brands can ensure that these ads are delivered at times when those individuals are most likely to be receptive to their messages.

User engagement is a fundamental goal for advertisers and that it is time to focus more on the overall user experience than just delivering an ad that has the opportunity to be seen. Brands and publishers need to address viewability with consumers at the centre of importance, research has shown that poor user experience, even with enhanced viewability will likely not yield desired outcomes. Fewer, high quality, appropriate interactions has to be the long-term goal.

Rich, interactive content

The increase in online video and interactive ads has certainly helped to change the focus of the user experience. Many research studies have shown that there is a higher level of audience engagement with richer, more interactive content. A recent study by Yahoo found that 61% of consumers prefer ads that are 30 seconds or less, proving that smaller more concise ads can have a significantly more positive effect on a user's experience and levels of engagement. With today's audiences consuming information at a faster rate, users expect advertising to be engaging and more targeted to them.

According to a CMO Council survey, 43% of marketers said personalisation led to more conversions. Ads that are personalised to consumers will drive better results, improving response rates and increasing brand loyalty and drive engagement. Yet marketers are still focusing on viewability percentages rather than their consumers responses to their ads. Most consumers receive ad banners that are irrelevant to their needs and interests. If marketers and publishers used more data tools to gain more insight and understanding of the needs of their customers, they would be able to provide users with better experiences and boost engagement through the personalisation of content.

*Insights and statistics collected from US, UK and South African data sources.

About Exponential

Exponential Interactive delivers innovative advertising experiences that transform the way audiences interact with brands across desktop and mobile. Exponential's platform fuses one of the largest global digital media footprints and proprietary data with user-centric ad formats designed to drive engagement and performance. Creativity, data and audience insights form the foundation for building smart and relevant brand engagement and brand performance solutions for advertisers and publishers. Exponential was founded in 2001 and has locations in 22 countries.

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