

SEPTEMBER 2022  
APAC

the  
executive  
view

# Making the right impression

Building safe brands



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## From the Editor

Consumers and the industry at large, have accelerated their shift towards digital as new media vendors and emerging channels have all increased supply to meet demand. It has been a dynamic shift that has seen brands grasp the opportunity to more efficiently reach engaged audiences.

With the change in digital media ecosystem, however, the quality of content has come in question. Low value entities have entered to exploit the advertising dollar. Advertisers and media buyers should be rightfully concerned that their programmatic buys can show up in unexpected places.

With an influx of issues on the social agenda - global pandemic, wars, highly polarized political rhetoric, and ongoing coverage of key social justice issues - deciding on how you want your brand to show up in public, let alone controlling where your ads appear, can be daunting. With 60% of consumers concerned over fake news in Asia<sup>1</sup>, many advertisers have voiced the need to clean up the increasingly murky ecosystem.

### Why build a brand just to tear it down online?

Procter and Gamble reduced programmatic spends globally by \$140 million due to brand safety issues. The action here is seen as 'good' but also contributing to growth: having a presence in reliable news sources drives better ad effectiveness; 58% of consumers buy or advocate for brands based on their beliefs or values; information quality in media receives at +3.0pt gain in consumer trust<sup>3</sup>.

### For brands wanting to build trust in Asia, less than 15% of media spends have Brand Safety or Verification controls in place.

For many, this has come down to efficiency of spend. Simply, the cost of Brand Safety and Verification adds ~6% cost to a media plan.

Determining risk tolerance is critical in the pursuit of audience reach and relevance. Brands must weigh up the risk of a more expensive media placement, versus the benefits of more quality content environments or supporting more trusted news media publishers.

Ultimately, paying more for one impression may leave a lasting impression on consumers.



**Josh Gallagher**  
Chief Operating Officer  
MediaCom APAC

1. GroupM Consumer Eye 2021 Wave 4 Research; 2. Magna Global Report 2022; 3. Edelman Trust Barometer 2022



Why

# 15% is not enough

With only 15% of media spends activating Brand Safety or Verification measures, publishers and platforms need to work harder to create and exchange with consumers that delivers both sustainable business and optimal media experiences.

┌

Across consumer groups in APAC

# 45%

**would have a negative opinion about a brand**

if it appeared next to inappropriate/offensive content

└

The hyper intensity of the news cycle has consumers concerned with brands' role in the digital ecosystem.

**35%**



concerned on ads supporting inappropriate content

**50%**



concerned on fake news on social media


**40%**



concerned over illicit content



1. GroupM Consumer Eye 2021 Wave 4 Research



People should be able to express themselves openly and creatively online but should publishers or brands be responsible to their communities?

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Building **#safebrands** needs more investment in safe, secure and welcoming environments.

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Invest in real people not robots – be personally accountable to updating content and providing better online experiences.

[#brandsafety](#) [#digitamarketing](#) [#opinions](#)

# Time to lead the conversation on online safety



Safeguarding brand image is a consistent priority for marketers, but there is no one-size-fits-all solution to brand safety. Brands need to establish their own media quality guidelines and minimum standards. They must be proactive in evolving their practices to stay ahead of the next crisis, while also preparing for the cookieless future and the emergence of new addressable media channels. This starts with placing emphasis on brand suitability, through content that meets brand values and helps save on ad spends by minimizing wasted inventory.

**With this strategy, brands can achieve scaled target audiences, improved message resonance, and ultimately increase ROI.**



**Deepika Nikhilender**  
CEO Xaxis

More brands are now being built online. As these brands expand their digital footprint they are quickly searching for new platforms to achieve reach, relevance or both. Not all programmatic platforms can scan for images and video for the right context, exposing advertisers to inappropriate content in real time.

**Every day, 5 billion videos are being watched on YouTube and 500 million Tweets are published on Twitter. Content is out of control.**

With much of this user initiated unvetted content, advertisers and publishers must consistently adapt to new challenges and environments to keep ads brand safe. As a result, the industry has started making progress toward creating standardized definitions for brand safety and suitability.



**IAS** Integral  
Ad Science

As a brand safety and suitability leader, IAS aligns brand safety solutions with GARM's principles. Offering full coverage of the GARM framework, includes risk levels, in measurement and programmatic (i.e. pre-bid) offerings. In addition, IAS adapt the GARM framework to include video content on social platforms, such as TikTok.



# Three areas where considerations on context need to evolve



## 01

### DEI in the BAV Space

In earlier days, many keywords that were added to Brand Safety controls were often related to content that would attempt to avoid topics like racism and LGBTQI+ issues. This has meant that keyword lists that have not been updated could also unfairly be punishing content and voices that have historically had great online reach. Assessing current practices could mean additional monetization is possible for those that cover underrepresented issues.

Mediacom and GroupM have partnered with IAS to develop standards and practices to remove problematic keywords and focus on utilizing more contextual brand safety solutions by leveraging IAS's Context Control Avoidance technology.

## 02

### Monetizing Misinformation?

As ad spending grows, media quality threats will remain top of mind. Most industry experts flag content-spreading misinformation, disinformation, and fake news as the most concerning media quality threats, with 63 per cent reporting "high" or "very high" levels of concern. In such an event, the impact on company reputation and consumer distrust is a more significant problem than campaign ROI.

Inadvertently monetising publishers that are low-quality is a genuine danger, especially when coupled with the fact that a dollar spent on these sites is a dollar that would have been better spent on a local, regional, or national news sites or similar environments with editorial guardrails and a commitment to producing responsible media.

## 03

### Building Safety in Emerging Channels

At a time when concerns are still prevalent on established forms of digital media, it is, therefore, no surprise that emerging channels, such as audio, CTV, DOOH, and gaming, are highly vulnerable to brand safety violations.

Developing effective technology solutions and promoting greater transparency across the supply chain could prove vital in upholding brand safety standards within emerging channels. As emerging channels are filled with an increasing variety of media formats – such as video, images, audio and influencers – it's clear that there needs to be standard practices to help the buy-side safely navigate and understand the suitability of each when considering where to place their ads.

# Making the right impression online

To venture into a safer advertising experience, brands need to learn how to effectively use the technology. Practices should match the degree of a brand's maturity in the field. Companies typically fall into **three archetypes**:

01



Basic

**Brands that have just started testing the waters in Brand Safety can focus on:**

**Enablement of pre-bid solutions for IVT avoidance and content exclusions**

Standard as part of programmatic buying strategies.

**Creation of domain inclusion and exclusion lists by brand/product**

Employ, and regularly, review inclusion and exclusion lists to ensure trusted sites are a part of your strategy.

**Leverage brand safety content categories:**

Avoid relying on binary (on-off) brand safety solutions that automatically limit scale. Build a risk tolerance benchmark.

02



Good

**Brands that are making Brand Safety a pillar of digital media can try:**

**Creation of BAV protection framework by brand/product with contextual suitability guidance**

Defined brand values, implemented in campaigns.

**Leverage Post Bid Brand safety for greater protection**

Deployed post-bid blocking will enable the greatest protection against poor quality and misaligned content.

**Signed T&Cs and COC signed with all main digital media partners/suppliers**

Agreements in place with all partners to ensure campaign delivery.

03



Brilliant

**Brands that are scaling up to an innovative brand safe business can move to:**

**Establish selection of preferred contextual/semantic intelligence solutions for targeting across digital media types and environments**

Avoid technology that leverages personal information (via Cookies) and is able to reach consumers at scale.

**Formalize a Brand Suitability strategy with Contextual Avoidance**

Use advanced techniques like sentiment analysis and Natural Language Processing to determine whether content conveys a positive, neutral or negative emotion.

**Leverage Contextual performance data to optimize digital media scenario planning**

Setting up data transfer of performance data from contextual/content targeting strategies will enable planning based on where ads are being actually served.



# Start with benchmarking

Setting a baseline for ROI success is a critical starting point in a Brand Safety Journey



As we progress into the cookieless future, our ability to connect, engage, and influence consumer actions that drive real business outcomes continues to be a challenge amidst the rapidly changing landscape.

**Partnering with IAS on this front enabled us to leverage the power of AI and advanced contextual capabilities that enhance relevance at scale.**

**Jona Oboza**  
General Manager  
**Xaxis Taiwan**

## Insight

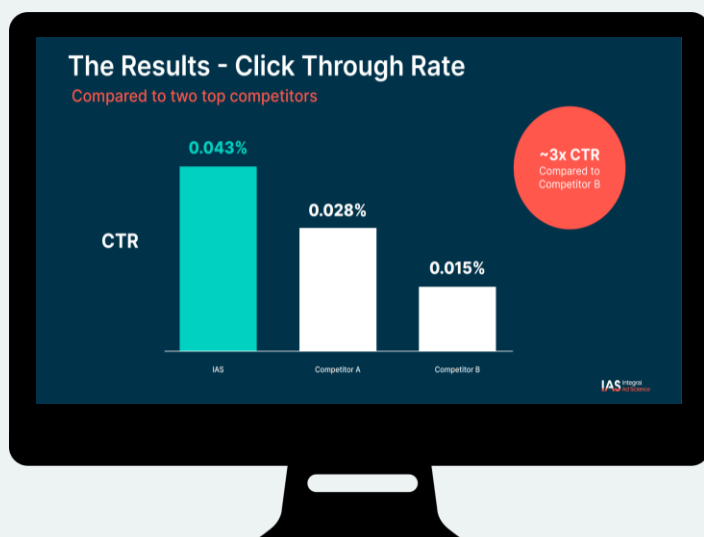
A major fashion retailer in Taiwan needed to raise brand awareness and drive as much website traffic as possible within eight days. With the impending deprecation of cookies, they proactively explored alternatives to safe audience targeting.

## Execution

To address this challenge, GroupM activated Context Control Targeting, using vertical-based contextual targeting segments and audience proxy targeting segments to drive website traffic and site visits for the advertiser's wedding apparel campaign.

## Results

IAS demonstrated strong results for both click-through rate and site visits. In fact, the click-through rate was 3 times higher than competitive benchmarks.



# Education: An ongoing understanding of Brand Safety

With Brand Safety and Content changing more rapidly than in the past, Brands need to constantly review policy. It certainly isn't a 'one and done'.

## 01 Why?

### Over time, brand safety has evolved.

While most brands agree on what constitutes unsafe content, the ideal advertising environment will likely be unique to a given brand. In other words, an alcohol brand and a children's brand might agree on what content to avoid, but they likely have different ideas about what content environments they prefer; that's where reviewing brand suitability comes in.

Contextual relevance is the latest development toward achieving successful, impactful ad adjacencies.

Going beyond the content topic, contextual relevance also accounts for the sentiment and emotion intended by the author.

## 02 When?

### Risks are possible in programmatic advertising

Since ads are bought and sold through automated processes, buyers can't predict exactly where your ad will appear. In a study by Integral Ad Science, 56% of US digital media professionals surveyed consider programmatic advertising vulnerable to brand risk incidents.

Wherever you advertise – desktop or mobile app, display or video, social media or connected TV – you need to continuously reduce the risk that your ad may appear alongside content inappropriate for your brand. Review as often as the popular news cycle.

## 03 How?

### Establish Best Practice to ensure your brand safety strategy is efficient, up-to-date, and effective.

- 1. Scrub your keyword lists** – often! Revisit and refresh your keyword lists, ideally every quarter.
- 2. Use inclusion lists and other overrides:** Employ inclusion lists to ensure that trusted sites are included in your strategy.
- 3. Determine your risk tolerance** for commonly evaluated content topics – i.e. adult content, alcohol – and set your brand safety settings to balance your campaign goals with your risk tolerance.
- 4. Partner with publishers:** Ensures your media partners understand your brand safety requirements and engage in an open dialogue to ensure both sides are successful.

# the executive view

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The Executive View recognizes there are still many topics in our industry that require more than just a 'rally cry' for change. Raising important growth areas of the business is key in getting the Executive support to take positive action throughout an organization.

At MediaCom APAC we are committed to sharing thorough yet practical thought leadership with the industry. Our whitepapers and virtual event series **loop\_live** are publicly and freely available to all marketers. Keep an eye out for upcoming editions and events as well as a wealth of past publications on our [website](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Keen to discuss how MediaCom can help your brands grow?

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