

Global Media Charter

Advertisers' principles for partnership in the
digital media advertising ecosystem



Co-Created with WFA corporate members and
the following national advertiser associations:



Introduction

Radical shifts in media consumption have given birth to major new global media owners and entirely new media trading mechanisms. Global media investment committed to ‘digital’ overtook TV for the first time in 2017.

As it’s developed, tensions have emerged between the contrasting manner in which the industry operates in traditional media, compared to online. Questions around what constitutes a ‘view’ is a good technical example of this.

We believe in the need to re-balance the industry around the principle of greater respect for all parties. This may require the re-basing of relationships between the tripartite of client, agency and media owner. But critically, we also seek to engender greater trust among consumers.

The future of the digital media ecosystem is contingent on our ability to make serious and lasting changes to the way we do business. Urgent change is required.

From an advertiser perspective, there remain concerns around transparency, viewability, brand safety, ad fraud and other issues. We also have concerns around data access and the withdrawal of third party measurement systems, critical for us to invest with confidence.

In this Global Media Charter we identify the key issue areas, as we see them today. We also identify the principles by which we seek to operate with our partners to resolve the same issues. **Our principles for partnership. Equally, in this document we are making commitments to the industry in the interest of greater respect towards our partners and consumers.**

Many of the principles covered in this Charter are essentially applicable to the entire media ecosystem (both on and offline). Transparency throughout the supply-chain, for example, is a key advertiser requirement equally in TV, Out Of Home, Print and online media.

Additionally, the need for robust measurement, the central focus of WFA’s original [Media Charter](#), from 2008, is universal and crosses the media divide.

But we believe that digital is the area where more attention is specifically required, to set standards and to implement sensible, respectful principles for modern media management. Digital is the main focus in this Charter.

This Charter sets out what advertisers think about the key issues we face in digital media today. But it is not supposed to solve all of them. It’s a starting point. A means to codify the needs of the media investors who fund this ecosystem. The advertisers.

“The WFA Global Media Charter draws an important line in the sand. It identifies, in no uncertain language, what steps the industry needs to take to rebuild trust. This is not the start, nor the end, of this journey. But if these actions are now addressed now, this will not end well. I hope that each and every player in the ecosystem takes this Charter as seriously as we as Advertisers are taking it. Let us jointly take responsibility and actively drive the changes we need in our industry. Time is running out.”



Gerhard Louw
International Media Management
& Digital Transformation



WFA Media Forum co-chair

About the WFA and this document

WFA is the only global organisation representing the common interests of marketers. It brings together the biggest markets and marketers worldwide, representing roughly 90% of all the global marketing communications spend, almost US\$ 900 billion annually.

This Global Media Charter has been co-written by a number of WFA members including both corporate global advertisers and national advertiser associations. The document has the support of the membership, which includes:

WFA champions responsible and effective marketing communications.



Executive summary

We have identified eight areas where advertiser concerns are most magnified and where we believe there are the greatest opportunities to re-balance the way we operate with our ecosystem partners. Our ‘principles for partnership’:



1. Zero tolerance to ad fraud with compensation for any breach

The industry is taking considerable steps to address ad fraud but it remains a threat. Any media investment committed by advertisers (and associated fees) found to be associated with invalid traffic / non-human impressions should be automatically refunded.



2. Strict brand safety protection

This is the fastest rising media issue on WFA members’ agendas. For advertisers to invest with confidence, comprehensive and rigorous safeguards are required, with responsibility assumed by platforms for the content carried on their sites.



3. Minimum viewability thresholds

Advertisers should be able to trade against whatever viewability level delivers the required outcome for the business, including 100% in-view for full duration, if desired.



4. Transparency throughout the supply-chain

Complete transparency throughout the media supply-chain (digital or otherwise), is critically important to advertisers. Full disclosure is required for pricing & trading, fees & costs, placement, data, and other areas.



5. Third party verification and measurement as a basic

Advertisers seek media inventory which is viewable, fraud free and brand safe. Verification of whether these criteria have been met should be received from an impartial third-party source. We do not accept self-reported data.



6. Addressing ‘walled garden’ issues

In addition to the above ‘walled gardens’ issues, advertisers seek to use the licensed third-party buying platform of their choice in any and all environments. Limitations placed upon inventory and/or data access, based on the DSP used, are not acceptable.



7. Improving standards with data transparency

The way data is collected and used by some in our industry has played a part in reducing trust in online advertising. We need a fundamental shift towards an ecosystem built on trust, control and respect for people’s data.



8. Improving the user experience

Consumers are increasingly frustrated with ads that disrupt their experience, interrupt content and slow browsing. Advertisers require platforms and publishers to optimise towards the ad formats found by the Coalition for Better Ads to be less intrusive.

Our principles for partnership

The principles covered in this Charter reflect the issues, as we see them, today. For each principle we make clear our requirements from partners (media agencies, media owners, publishers and platforms), in order to resolve the issue at hand. In the interests of balance, we make a number of commitments to the ecosystem too.

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Zero tolerance to ad fraud with compensation for any breach

Ad fraud is one of the fastest growing cyber-crimes. Though it is notoriously hard to estimate, global penetration is likely to be upwards of 10% of all digital media spend. Based on current trends, ad fraud is likely to represent more than \$50 billion by 2025.

www.wfanet.org/adfraud

Requirements from our partners

- Any media investment committed by advertisers, to publishers or platforms, found to be associated with invalid traffic **should be automatically refunded**.
- This process should be as streamlined and as simple as possible. Refunds should be passed back to clients within a reasonable time-frame.
- Any fees/commissions paid to intermediaries (including agency, ad tech, data partners), associated with invalid traffic should also be refunded.
- Where they are not directly administering verification tools, advertisers require unencumbered access to accounts and data in order to monitor ad fraud exposure.
- To invest with confidence, brands need to know that counter ad fraud vendors are certified by recognised institutions, such as the Media Ratings Council in the US (MRC) or Joint Industry Committee for Web Standards in the UK (JICWEBS).

Commitment from advertisers

- Advertisers acknowledge that discrepancies are typically found between different ad serving and verification tools – there is no ‘single version of the truth’.
- With this in mind, the process of SIVT identification and ultimate compensation should require prior agreement of an industry-accredited third party verification vendor.
- Advertisers have become accustomed to certain investment levels and ‘reach’ targets. There is now a greater understanding that these targets, informed by agreements with media vendors, were not always realistic.
- **Advertisers acknowledge that it may not always be possible to achieve previous targets without exposing buys to high levels of fraud.**

Existing solutions we support:

- The Authorised Digital Sellers (ads.txt) solution can be used by publishers to declare the companies they authorize to sell their inventory. This gives brands confidence that they are buying authentic inventory and should be implemented by all publishers.
- The Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) focuses on creating transparency in the relationships and transactions that undergird the digital ad industry. TAG’s ad fraud program has helped to focus efforts and resources on the elimination of this threat.

“Why should brands pay for ad fraud breaches? Why should we support a flawed ecosystem? We welcome industry initiatives to educate the market and remove some of the more nefarious fraud but that’s not enough. We need to remain ruthlessly focussed on the fact that ad fraud is not acceptable. We are not going to pay for it.”



Leana Less
VP Global Connections and
Media



Strict brand safety protection

Brand safety was the fastest escalating priority for 70% of WFA members' in 2017. The risks go beyond potentially devastating negative impact on brand reputation and even put wellbeing and safety at risk.

www.wfanet.org/news-centre/global-marketers-making-radical-changes-to-media-management/

Requirements from our partners

- Advertisers require platforms and publishers to be meticulous with regard to how advertising is placed alongside content on their sites.
- We require the employment of **comprehensive and rigorous safeguards**, including stricter limits placed on which accounts and channels can host paid advertising. These safeguards and limits should apply to User Generated Content (UGC), in particular. There should also be clear visibility of how these controls work, including their limitations.
- **Advertisers require platforms and publishers to accept responsibility for the content carried on their sites.**
- Where they are not directly administering verification tools, advertisers require access to client specific accounts in order to monitor the exposure of ads to any inappropriate content.
- To invest with confidence, brands need to know that brand safety vendors are certified by recognised institutions, such as the Media Ratings Council in the US (MRC) or Joint Industry Committee for Web Standards in the UK (JICWEBS).
- **It's vitally important that advertisers with statutory or self-regulatory commitments be given the robust functionality to ensure that their ads are not seen by certain age groups.** This is especially important in the context of certain sectors (e.g. food and alcohol) which may have specific criteria to adhere to in order to comply with regulatory commitments.

Commitment from advertisers

- Advertisers have become accustomed to certain investment levels and 'reach' targets. There is now a greater understanding that these targets, informed by agreements with media vendors, were not always realistic.
- Advertisers acknowledge that it may not always be possible to achieve previous targets without increasing the risk of ads appearing in inappropriate environments.
- We will disclose our brand safety criteria and policies, prior to activation.
- We will not invest in platforms or environments that do not protect our children or which create division in society, and promote anger or hate.
- We understand that advertising can fuel and sustain sites which misuse and infringe upon Intellectual Property (IP) laws. Equally, advertising revenue may be used to sustain sites responsible for 'fake news' content or 'disinformation'. **Advertisers commit to avoiding (and support their partners in the avoidance of) the funding of actors seeking to influence division or seeking to inflict reputational harm on business or society and politics at large through content that appears false and/or misleading.**

"The global media charter sets out the baseline for what a better digital ecosystem would look like for our industry and also for society. Quality and transparency for consumers should be our number one goal because without that everything we do in digital can be questioned."



Luis Di Como
Senior VP
Global Media



Minimum Viewability thresholds

Even based on a lowly standard of 50% of the ad being in view for 1 second, on average, global viewability levels for online display continue to decline. Now standing at 50%. That means only half of the ads served are half in view. Does this qualify as an opportunity to see?

www.wfanet.org/news-centre/global-viewability-improves-for-video-but-display-lags/

Requirements from our partners

- Brands should be able to **trade against** whatever viewability level delivers the required outcome for the business, including **100% in-view for full duration**, if desired.
- Viewability levels should be quoted net of Sophisticated Invalid Traffic (SIVT).
- To invest with confidence, brands need to know that viewability vendors are certified by recognised institutions, such as the Media Ratings Council in the US (MRC), Joint Industry Committee for Web Standards in the UK (JICWEBS), the European Viewability Steering Group (EVSG).
- Where they are not directly administering verification tools, advertisers require access to client specific accounts in order to monitor ad viewability.
- Viewability is an important metric, but is one among many. We ask partners to help enable trading and remuneration against the metrics that matter to advertisers (both output and outcome where appropriate), throughout the funnel.

Commitment from advertisers

- Advertisers have become accustomed to certain investment levels and 'reach' targets. There is now a greater understanding that these targets, informed by agreements with media vendors, were not always realistic.
- Advertisers also understand that there are potential **consequences associated with higher viewability standards, including a possible reduction to inventory supply** (and reach).

"Current viewability standards are in no way sufficient. As advertisers, we should push hard for viewability guarantees with either returned investment or equivalent compensation units. We should not accept paying for advertisements which consumers have no opportunity to fully see. We do not accept this TV, print, OOH and any other media channel. There is no reason why it should be any different in digital."



Oliver Maletz
Global Head of
Communications
and Media
VOLKSWAGEN
AKTIENGESellschaft

Transparency throughout the supply-chain

Depending on your programmatic model as little as 40%** to 60%* of your media investment will make it to the publisher as ‘working media’. Not all of this is lost value, however tracking who benefits from this investment has become increasingly hard to monitor in a highly inefficient and murky supply-chain.

*www.acaweb.ca/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/07/2017-ACA-ANA-Programmatic-Study-FINAL.pdf

**www.wfanet.org/programmatic

Requirements from our partners

- Complete transparency throughout the media supply-chain (digital or otherwise), is critically important to advertisers. Advertisers require full disclosure from their media agency partners (including their holding company parents where appropriate), as it relates to their unilaterally negotiated media investment:
 - **Pricing & trading** / disclosures of all rebates, free space, AVBs, ‘Service Level Agreements’, etc. Visibility into auction dynamics is required. It should also be clear on what basis the agency is operating (i.e. ‘principal-at-law’ or ‘agency-at-law’);
 - **Fees & costs** / disclosures of all media and technology partners involved in the supply-chain, including the additional costs (and rebates) associated with each;
 - **Placement** / clear and specific descriptions of ad placement and context, with disclosures down to the URL/App level;
 - **Event & transaction data** / disclosures of data used or associated with any transaction including: winning bid log data & meta data, pre & post bid reporting, campaign performance data. Also details should be provided for how client specific data is stored and how it can be accessed by advertisers. Separately, it’s important that data should be available for migration to another agency partner, should clients seek to move the business as part of a review;
 - **Preferred suppliers** / disclosures of all partners where there are preferred agreements in place, whether that be commercial or otherwise.

Commitment from advertisers

- Advertisers respect our agency partners’ right to have a sustainable business model and commit to relevant and fair levels of remuneration for services rendered, agreed by both parties.
- We commit to developing internal processes, and to update contracts regularly in order to factor in tech developments. We commit to take leadership on contract monitoring and communication of tracking.
- We will make the effort to understand and respect agency partners’ policies, procedures and IP.

Existing solutions we support:

- Template agency contracts produced by associations are a powerful means of driving best practices into the local market and enshrining financial transparency between clients and their partner media agencies.
- The first version of ISBA’s ‘Media Services Framework’ has been widely adopted in the UK, and has formed the groundwork for similar initiatives in other markets (including AANA (Aus.), ANA (US), ISA (India)).
- Subsequent versions released independently in Australia, the UK and US are expected to bring greater control to their home markets and globally.

“As the market continues to change quickly, global brands are being more tangible and specific about what we expect from the entire ecosystem; our tech partners, agency partners media owners and digital platforms. The WFA’s Global Media Charter is designed to ensure that everyone has the same common understanding of what we all need to do to thrive. Everyone should join us on this journey.”



Benjamin Jankowski

Group Head,
Global Media



WFA Media Forum
Co-Chair

Third party verification and measurement as a basic

Transparency in media measurement was a founding tenant of the WFA in 1953. Advertisers have never accepted media owners 'marking their own homework'. The same applies in digital media.

Requirements from our partners

- Ultimately advertisers seek media inventory which is
 - viewable
 - fraud free (net of SIVT)
 - brand safe
 - on-target audience
- Verification of whether the above criteria have been met should be received from an impartial third-party source. **We do not accept self-reported data.**
- Measurement by, and acceptance of, third party ad serving and verification tags by all media owners and ad tech companies is a critical requirement from advertisers' publisher and platform partners.
- Advertisers support audience measurement approaches which work across media and embrace currencies which are comparable in different media environments. These measurements are best supervised by a Joint Industry Committee (JIC).

Commitment from advertisers

- Advertisers commit to the prioritisation of third party ad serving and verification companies who have taken the steps to be audited and certified by the relevant industry approved bodies, e.g. MRC, EVSG and JICWEBS.
- Advertisers will disclose thresholds for verification prior to starting any activity with a partner.

Existing solutions we support:

- It's worth drawing the distinction between discrete and specific advertiser/agency-led approaches to verification and market-wide adoption of common standards (which provide a degree of security to all actors). In France, publishers certified by the third party auditors (CESP, ACPM) can display the Digital Ad Trust (DAT) label, to demonstrate that they satisfy a number of verification requirements and criteria. It is the responsibility of the publishers to obtain and to pay for this label.
- Making Measurement Make Sense (3MS) is a cross-industry initiative founded by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's), the Association of National Advertisers (ANA, US), and the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB). Among other things 3MS seeks clear standards-based metrics for interactive advertising that are comparable to traditional media.
- 3MS and the Media Ratings Council (MRC) are working towards introducing an online Gross Ratings Point metric, providing reach and frequency reporting of viewable impressions. This sets the stage for cross platform comparability and for writing a standard for cross platform GRPs.

Addressing ‘walled garden’ issues

Requirements from our partners

- Advertisers seek to use the licensed third-party buying (demand-side) platform (DSP) of their choice in any and all environment(s). Limitations placed upon inventory and/or data access, based on the DSP used, are not acceptable. **Data, inventory and technology should be unbundled.**
- All audience data associated with inventory purchased on platforms should be available to advertisers for analysis in licenced third-party Data Management Platforms (DMP). Additionally, audience data should be independently verifiable by third party audits.
- Advertisers seek the means to track their level of media spending, within their competitive set and within their category. This level of visibility is currently entirely absent from reporting due to platforms not participating in competitive spend tracking exercises, often leaving advertisers in the dark. **We ask publisher and platform partners to help facilitate a solution to this challenge, by sharing impression level data with spend tracking companies.**

Commitment from advertisers

- Advertisers agree to handle walled garden data in accordance with local legislation and will not allow for it to be used for any other purpose outside of our own advertising efforts.

“The value that the major digital platforms, our partners, offer to advertisers is clear. But the spirit of partnership from these companies is not always on display. Behaviours which seek to limit the access of our technology or to withdraw our data are totally unacceptable. Rejecting third-party, impartial measurement standards is inadmissible. We need to define a new set of expectations and thresholds, globally, to define partnership in digital media today. This Charter goes a long way to providing that.”



Jerry Daykin
Head of Global Media
Partnerships
DIAGEO

Improving standards with data transparency

Cambridge Analytica, GDPR, data breaches... Today, consumers are more aware than ever that their data is being used to target them, and globally the evidence shows that trust in online advertising is at an all-time low.

Requirements from our partners

- Data has become an integral part of media activation. But people have a fundamental right to privacy and, for the industry to have a sustainable future, we need to recognize that and recalibrate the way we use data for the sake of the consumer.
- We expect our data supply chain partners to uphold the same high standards we set for ourselves when it comes to:
 - giving people full control over when, where and how they share their data.
 - giving people clear, simple information about how their data is being used.
 - making it easy to opt out.
 - complying with both the spirit and the letter of relevant self-regulatory and regulatory frameworks.

Commitment from advertisers

- Advertisers commit to developing clear actions around how to make data transparency a reality for consumers and commit to working with partners to implement this. Data should be
 - ethically and transparently sourced.
 - securely stored with appropriate assurance mechanisms, including audits.
- We will adopt a mindset of data minimization across the digital marketing organization, with a view to collecting, using and holding only the data that is necessary to deliver a quality advertising experience.

“The digital supply chain is a complex labyrinth shrouded in darkness, with scores of invisible players trading data to serve ads in the blink of an eye. Under the GDPR, weak links in that chain could fatally expose advertisers so it’s time to switch the lights on and manage those risks end to end.”



Jamie Barnard
General Counsel –
Global Media, Marketing
and eCommerce,



WFA Data Transparency
Chair

Improved User Experience

People are less receptive to advertising and it's our fault. 69%* of people find ads are more intrusive now than three years ago. More than 600 million** devices now use ad block software on the open web.

*www.millwardbrown.com/adreaction/integration/

**pagefair.com/blog/2017/adblockreport/

Requirements from our partners

- Consumers are increasingly frustrated with ads that disrupt their experience, interrupt content and slow browsing. Advertisers require platforms and publishers to optimise towards the ad formats found by the Coalition for Better Ads to be less intrusive and to offer a better user experience.

Commitment from advertisers

- Advertisers commit to rejecting the ad experiences that rank lowest across a range of user experience factors, and that are most highly correlated with an increased propensity for consumers to adopt ad blockers.

"These internal industry challenges must not blind us from focusing on what must be our goal, which is to serve our customers. The truth is that too often brand owners' dollars are behind a sub-optimal online user experience. Advertising needs to be seen to add value to the digital ecosystem by treating our audiences with respect. We all need to look beyond short-term gain to create a sustainable ecosystem."



David Wheldon
CMO



WFA President

Next steps

This Media Charter has been co-written by WFA members and the membership will play a critical role in the grounding and development of the principles.

We believe that these issues are best addressed via a global framework with local action, which WFA's mixed membership of national advertiser associations and global corporations, are well disposed towards.

The issues addressed require support from across the industry and we call on all players in the media value chain to participate in the implementation of this Charter. This includes:

- Media agency partners who provide integral support, globally;
- Technology partners, both direct and indirect;
- Media owner, publisher and platform partners, who help facilitate a connection to our customers and consumers;
- Consultant and auditor partners who we rely on for independent media advice.

The future of the digital media ecosystem is contingent on our ability to make serious and lasting changes to the way we do business. Urgent change is required.

“The outlook of the media directors mentioned in our Charter is global, however much of the success of this initiative will be dependent on the efforts of our local colleagues, supporting their national associations. Co-creating this charter with those organisations has enabled us to speak with one voice globally as we seek to find answers. As we have seen in the past, effective solutions at a local level can be adapted and scaled to good effect.”



Stephan Loerke
CEO

WFA

Acknowledgements

With thanks to all members and partners who contributed ideas and principles to this document.

Particular thanks to UPA (Italy) whose cross-industry ‘[Whitepaper on Digital Communication](#)’ from 2017, tackles many of the issues covered in this Charter in granular detail and is the forerunner for this project. Particular thanks also to Diageo and The Coca-Cola Company for individually sharing their Trusted / Responsible Market Place principles.

All of these initiatives provided much of the inspiration for this project.

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