



MRC To Identify Approaches to Address Measurement Challenges Posed by Server Side Ad Insertion (SSAI) Digital Video

New York, NY (July 22, 2020): The Media Rating Council (MRC) announced today that it has launched an initiative to identify best practices for addressing measurement challenges presented by Server Side Ad Insertion (SSAI) digital video techniques.

As an initial step, the MRC has begun holding a series of meetings with key stakeholders in the measurement of Server Side Ad Insertion (SSAI) digital video.

The first meeting of the charter members of the working group included MRC-member publishers and video ad servers and measurement vendors. The session centered on discussion of the key issues and ways that the industry can collaborate to overcome the obstacles to accurate measurement of activity presented by SSAI.

MRC will be expanding the composition of the group as the initiative moves forward to ensure that all stakeholders will have an opportunity to contribute to this initiative. The next meeting of the expanded working group is expected to be scheduled for later this Summer.

Server Side Ad Insertion, also referred to as Ad Stitching, was developed on the publisher side as a technological solution to deliver digital content to a player so that video content and ads can be played without the need to create and teardown separate players for the ads.

The use of an SSAI server can create a more seamless user viewing experience, given that ad decisions are made prior to the point at which an ad call would historically be requested (at the ad break).

SSAI is common today in OTT environments, but is also becoming increasingly prevalent in digital video ad serving.

SSAI, however, presents several problematic challenges to accurate measurement.

For example, measurement events may be communicated to the measurement vendor by another server, rather than the actual client device. Additionally, with SSAI the player may not be able to process ad-tracking, and the ad-stitching service cannot access cookies used in traditional client-side tracking.

As a result, the ad-stitching service must identify devices where ads play by utilizing a combination of other methods, often requiring cooperation from entities responsible for delivering the video content or with control of the players where content and ads are delivered. This can result in valid video impressions instead appearing to be invalid data center traffic, if the measurement vendor does not identify these events as SSAI. Conversely, invalid data center traffic can attempt to present itself as valid SSAI traffic by spoofing certain information common to SSAI traffic.

The MRC is planning to have a recommendation on best practices concerning SSAI, including identification of industry solutions, by year end of 2020. In addition, the recommended SSAI solutions will then be incorporated into MRC's forthcoming update and enhancement of its standards on OTT video measurement, as SSAI is widely employed in OTT environments.

For companies interested in contributing research on the topic or participating in the working group, please contact the MRC at loliveri@mediaratingcouncil.org.

About MRC

The Media Rating Council is a non-profit industry association established in 1963 comprised of leading television, radio, print and digital media companies, as well as advertisers, advertising agencies and trade associations, whose goal is to ensure measurement services that are valid, reliable and effective. Measurement services desiring MRC accreditation are required to disclose to their customers all methodological aspects of their service; comply with the MRC Minimum Standards for Media Rating Research as well as other applicable industry measurement guidelines; and submit to MRC-designed audits to authenticate and illuminate their procedures. In addition, the MRC membership actively pursues research issues they consider priorities in an effort to improve the quality of research in the marketplace. Currently approximately 110 research products are audited by the MRC. Additional information about MRC can be found at www.mediaringcouncil.org.

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