



Viewability

What Smart Marketers Need to Know

Introduction

Viewability emerged as a key issue in late 2012 and has had a major impact on how we perceive and measure digital campaign performance. Yet while viewability has risen quickly to the top of the agenda, for many marketers there are still major knowledge gaps when it comes to this topic.

Quantcast has undertaken over three years of experimentation, testing and development on viewability – analysing, on average, five billion impressions per month across over 10,000 publishers on every major RTB exchange. This analysis has allowed us to evaluate every major MRC-accredited viewability vendor in multiple rounds of head-to-head testing.

We learnt a lot from our research and now optimise towards viewability for over 400 clients on thousands of campaigns globally.

This paper breaks down everything marketers need to know about viewability into three sections:

1. How viewability is defined, measured and optimised
2. The hard truths of viewability
3. The impact of viewability on performance

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HOW VIEWABILITY IS DEFINED & MEASURED

What Is Viewability?

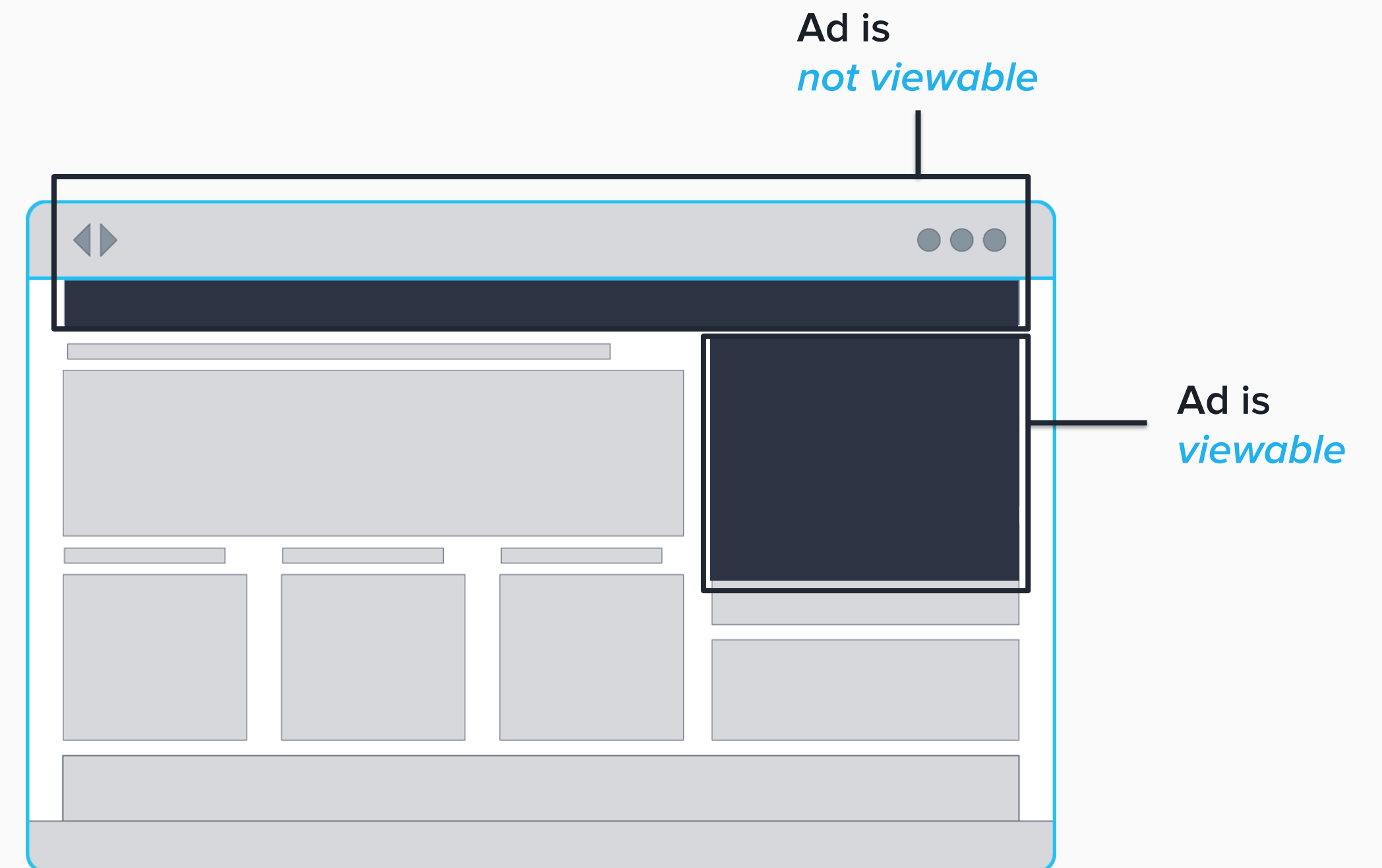
Viewability can be simply defined as the opportunity for an ad to be seen.

The Media Ratings Council (MRC) released full viewable ad impression guidelines in 2014 and provides the following definitions:

*A **display ad** is considered viewable when **50% of pixels** are displayed on screen for **one second or more**.*

*A **video ad** is considered viewable when at least **50% of the served video ad impression** is on a viewable space of a page on an in-focus browser tab while playing for at least **two continuous seconds**.*

There is currently **no MRC standard** definition for **mobile**.



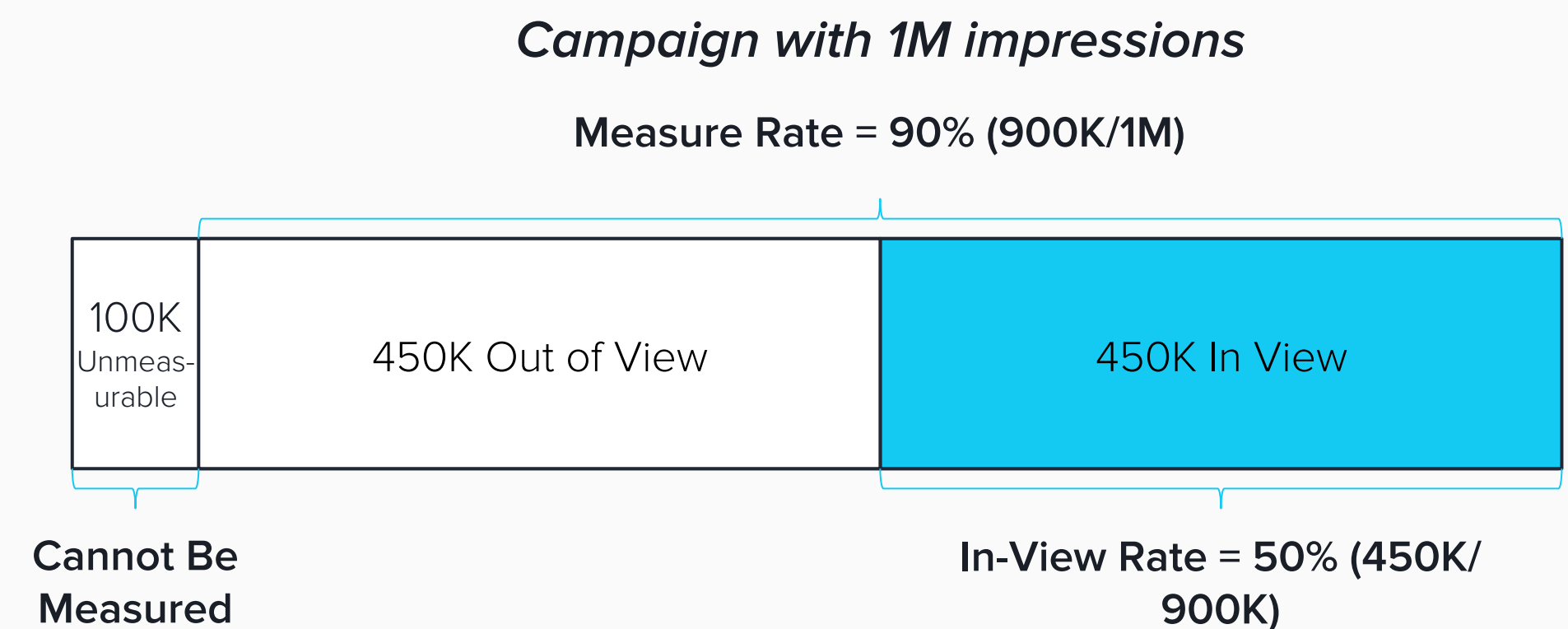
Defining Viewability for Display Ads

How Do You Measure Viewability?

HOW VIEWABILITY IS DEFINED & MEASURED

There are three distinct definitions when it comes to the viewable nature of ad inventory:

1. **In View:** Impressions that are measured as viewable or that have the opportunity to be seen by a consumer.
2. **Out of View:** These are impressions that are measured as non-viewable or impressions that don't have the opportunity to be seen by a consumer.
3. **Non-measured:** Viewability is measured by taking into account a number of variables. For example, operating system, browser and device. Occasionally, due to a lack of necessary information, some impressions can't be measured.



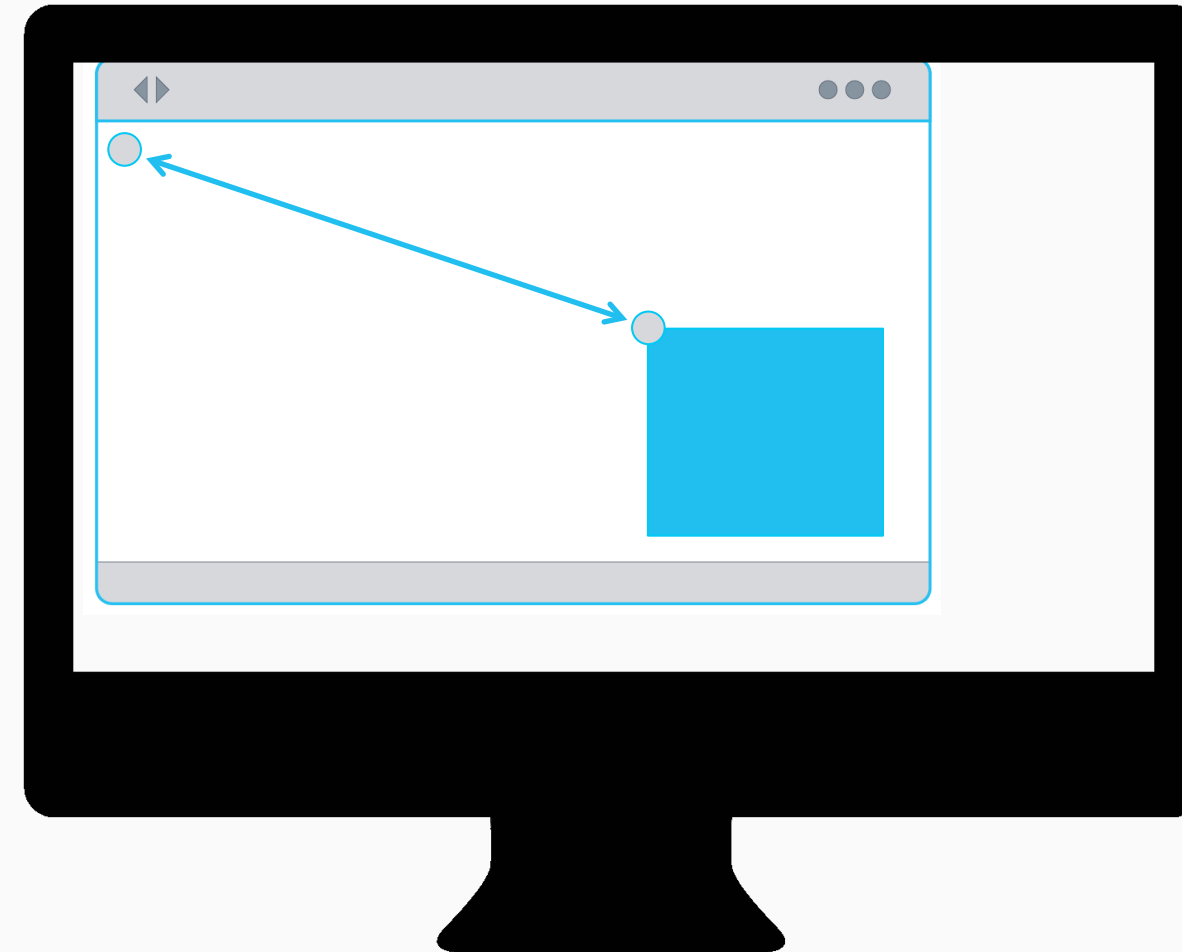
Example of Viewability Measurement on a Display Campaign

The Two Methods of Measuring Viewability

HOW VIEWABILITY IS DEFINED & MEASURED

GEOMETRIC METHOD

In this approach a pixel loads with the ad creative. This pixel can capture the page it's on and where it is on the page. It puts out 'feelers' to understand how long and wide the page is and where the ad is placed in reference to these measurements.



BROWSER OPTIMISATION METHOD

In order to be efficient with bandwidth, modern browsers load images and content right before the user scrolls to them. In this approach vendors monitor the website's internal process to ascertain when an ad is loading and therefore when it is in view.



Viewability Can Mean Missed Opportunities

THE HARD TRUTHS OF VIEWABILITY

NON-MEASURABLE INVENTORY

Quantcast research shows that, on average, **10% of inventory** cannot be measured for viewability due to lacking the necessary information for measurement. This means that high-value consumers may appear on inventory that can't be measured. Even though these ads may be viewable they will not be defined that way. If an advertiser is measuring to a strict viewability goal this can harm campaign performance.

VENDOR DISCREPANCIES

These missed opportunities can also occur due to discrepancies in viewability vendor results. For example, one vendor may find that a campaign averaged 60% viewability while another, using a different methodology, may find a campaign averaged nearer 80%.

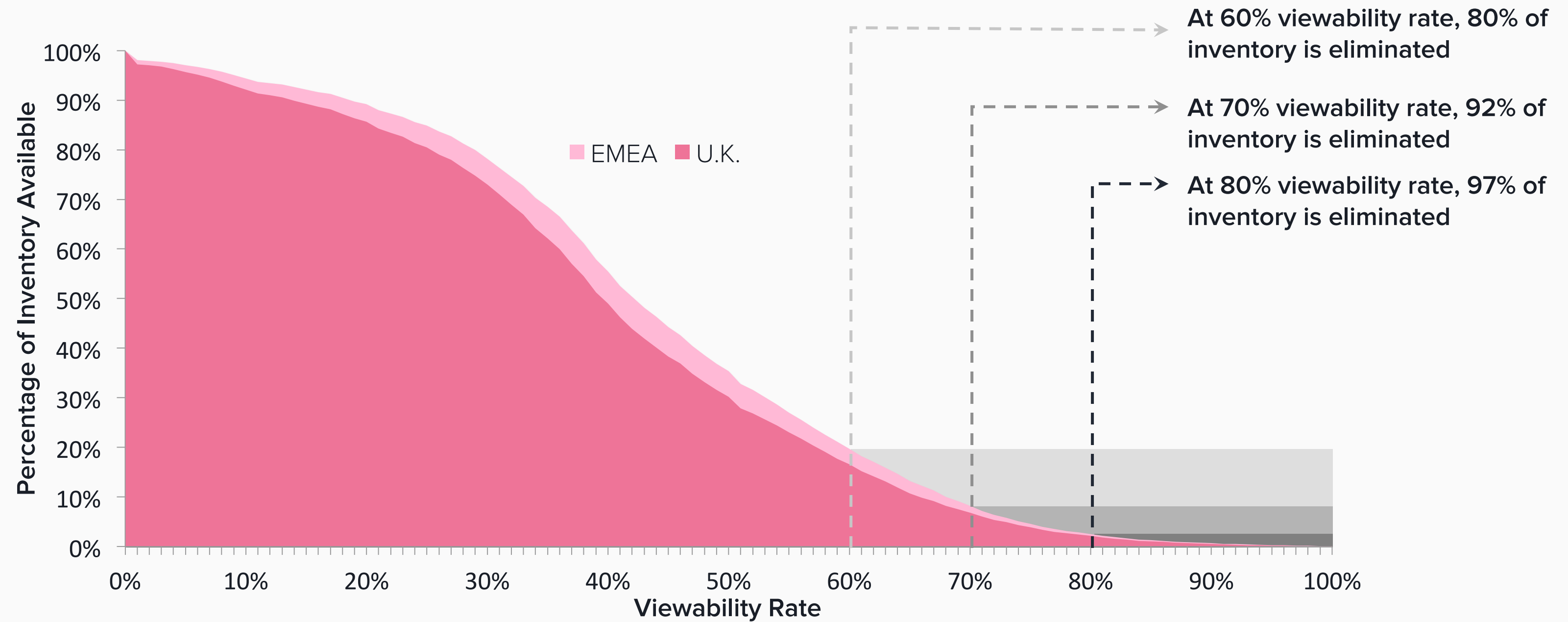
On average in the UK we found that **the average discrepancy between vendors is 7%**, with the maximum up to 33%.

Non-measurable inventory and discrepancies between viewability vendors mean that testing is hugely important before deciding on a viewability goal for your campaign.

How Much Viewable Inventory Is There?

THE HARD TRUTHS OF VIEWABILITY

There is a very limited supply of very high viewability inventory. Inventory with viewability above 80% constitutes just two to three percent of all RTB inventory in Europe. Due to supply being limited and demand being high, this same inventory can be up to 2x more expensive when compared to average RTB inventory.



Above-the-Fold Is a Poor Proxy for Viewability

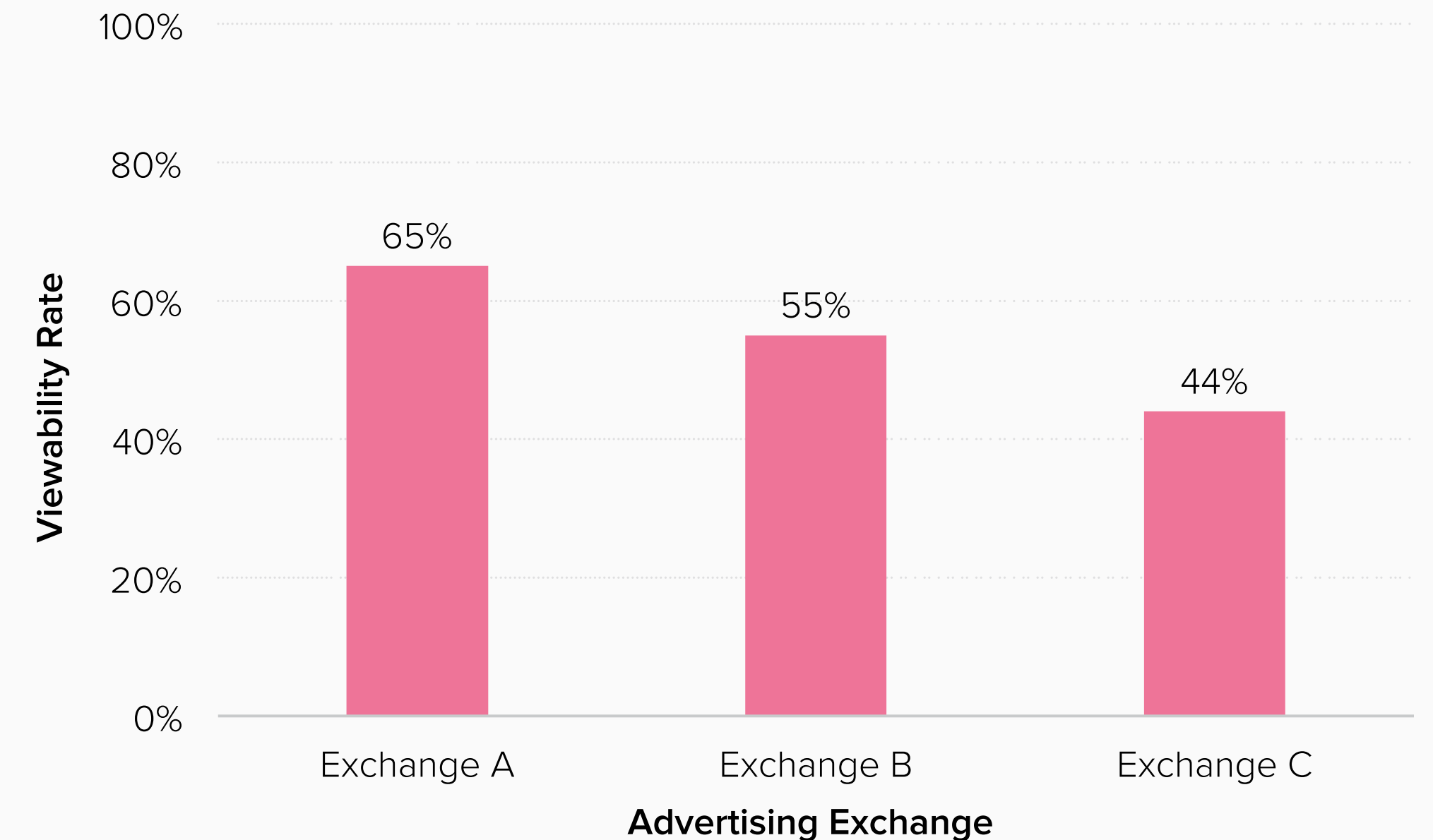
THE HARD TRUTHS OF VIEWABILITY

Placing an ad Above-the-Fold (ATF) refers to the ad being served in the upper half of a web page so it is visible without scrolling down the page.

Many marketers assume that ATF makes for higher viewability. However Quantcast research shows that ATF is a poor proxy for viewability, with one exchange at only 44% viewability rate on ATF inventory.

The variable rates of viewability on ATF inventory occur due to a couple of factors:

- Users often **quickly scroll past the top of the page** to reach their desired destination, not seeing an ad or going past an ad before it loads
- **Hyperlinks do not always link to the top of a page**; users can arrive halfway down a page but ads at the top of the page will still load



Viewability Rate of Above-the-Fold Inventory for Different Ad Exchanges

(Quantcast Campaign Data)

Is 100% Viewability Possible?

THE HARD TRUTHS OF VIEWABILITY

In short: no, 100% viewability is not possible right now. This is because not only is the amount of viewable inventory above 70% limited, but user behaviour is unpredictable.

There are two main factors that prevent viewability:

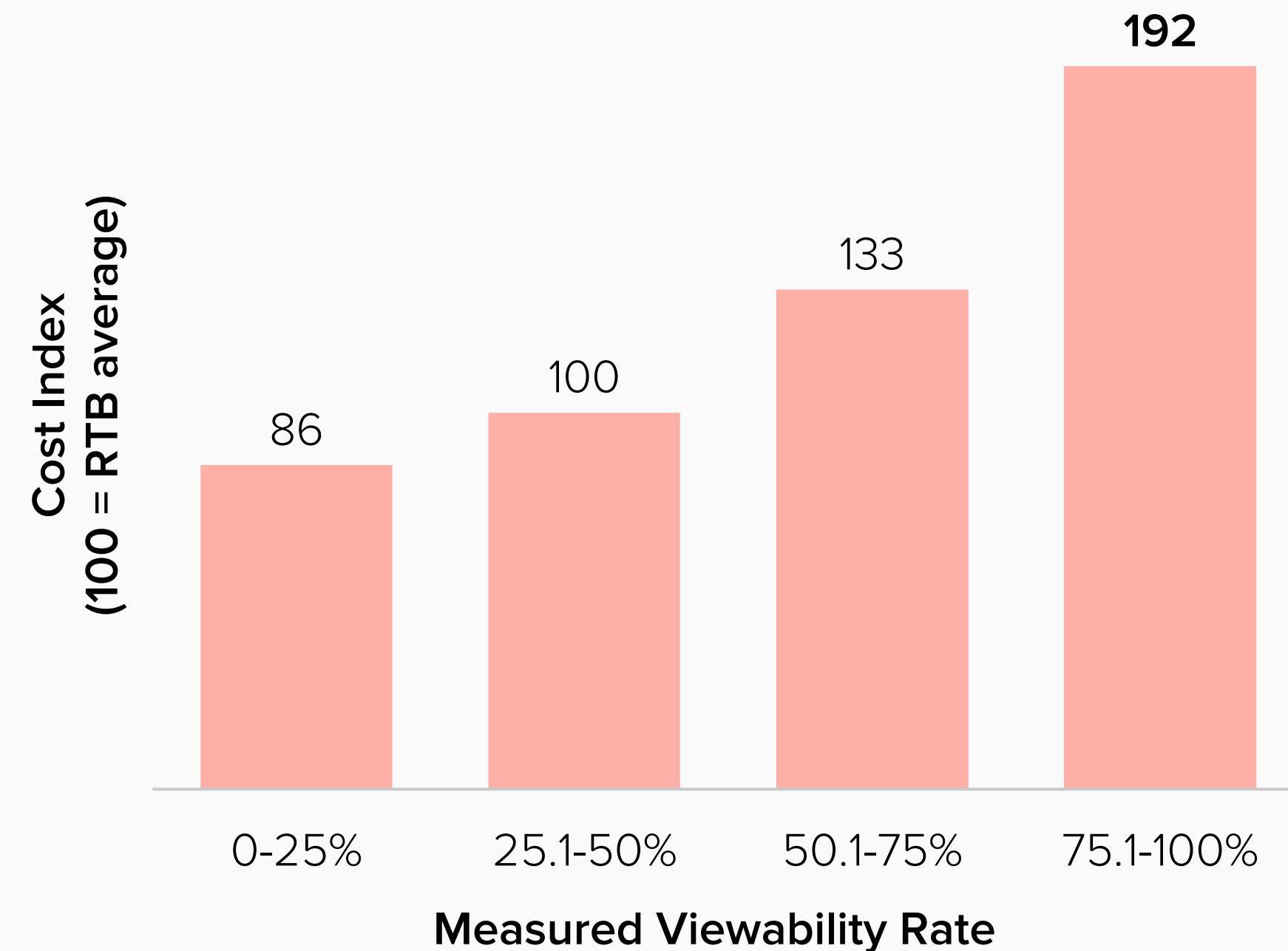
- 1. User Behaviour Is Unpredictable!**
If a consumer scrolls before an ad loads, if they have multiple tabs open or even if they frequently refresh web pages it means that an ad isn't seen.
- 2. Technology Isn't There Yet**
It's not just consumers but also websites that can create unpredictable circumstances. Web pages can be compromised; slow internet connections can cause loading errors, or ads can load in an area outside the viewable browser area.

Higher Viewability Inventory Means Higher Cost

THE IMPACT OF VIEWABILITY ON PERFORMANCE

As with any industry, online advertising is affected by supply and demand. There is a limited supply of high viewability inventory, and as this inventory faces surging demand the cost increases rapidly.

Inventory with over 75% viewability costs nearly 2x more than standard RTB inventory.



(Quantcast global campaign data, 2015)

Five Key Viewability Questions Answered

FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR MARKETERS

- 1. What is my optimal viewability rate?**
Your optimal viewability rate depends on your campaign parameters – budget size, mix of prospecting and retargeting, delivery constraints, etc. Always run a test and monitor continually to see what works best for your needs.
- 2. What viewability standards should I use for my plan?**
Once you have decided your optimal viewability rate, remember to hold all partners on the plan to the same viewability standards and judge them using an MRC-accredited viewability vendor.
- 3. Are all viewability vendors equal?**
No. It's important to keep in mind that viewability vendors utilise different technologies and achieve varying degrees of success in measurement.
- 4. Is above-the-fold inventory automatically viewable?**
No. Due to unpredictable consumer behaviour, such as quickly scrolling past the top of the page, above-the-fold inventory is not always viewable.
- 5. Will my viewability goals align with my existing attribution solution?**
While this will depend on your solution it is important to remember that attribution vendors still give credit to non-viewed impressions.



To learn more about Quantcast's display advertising solutions, contact us at uk@quantcast.com.

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