

Introduction to digital display advertising for media owners

This guide is intended for media owners that are relatively new to digital advertising or those that want to sharpen their knowledge on the basics of digital advertising.

Display advertising is a form of online advertising used to engage with online users and help them find out more about a specific product or service. Ads may feature text, images, video and/or audio. Some display ads are primarily used to educate consumers, while others prioritise engagement through call-to-action messages like 'learn more' or 'shop now'.

Standard ad units

Display advertising can come in several format sizes. Specifications exist for standard image or animated in-page ad units. This makes it easier for advertisers and their agencies to produce reusable creative formats and allows media owners to be able to serve these formats easily and efficiently without changing their site layout. For example, a skyscraper is a long, vertical, online advert usually found running down the side of a page in a fixed placement.

The following fixed size ad units are commonly used, are supported by the [Coalition for Better Ads](#) and can work across multiple screen sizes. For the purposes of simplicity, this list features banner ads only and excludes video formats.

Banner sizes & formats

Billboard / Megabanner



Fixed size *: 970 x 250

- High impact
- Premium positioning at the top of the page

DMPU / Double Mid Page Unit



Fixed size*: 300 x 600

- High impact

Leaderboard



Fixed size*: 728 x 90

- Standard format
- Commonly placed at the top of the page
- Scalability across most devices

Skyscraper



Fixed size*: 160 x 600 or 120 x 600

- Standard format
- Generally placed further down the page
- Runs down the side of the page

MPU (Mid Page Unit)



Fixed size*: 300 x 250

- Standard format
- Commonly sits within content feed
- Scalability across most devices

Smartphone/Mobile Banner



Fixed size*: 300 x 50 or 320 x 50

- Recommended static or simple animation to keep file size low for quick loading on mobile

Interstitial

Size: vary by media owner

- A full screen ad format that can scale across any device.
- A conversation during planning would determine if it's possible to run an interstitial and then agree the size



*Measured in pixels, the width and height of an ad unit (width x height). The width is always the first dimension listed, followed by the height dimension i.e. an ad that is 300x250 is 300 pixels wide by 250 pixels high.

File sizes of ads vary - larger format units are usually heavier in weight. Generally, ads will preload with a weight between 50-250KB and then subload with another 100-500KB, unless they are very light in file size and load all at once. The file type of ads delivered can also vary and may be HTML5, .jpeg or .gif. For more information on standard ad formats visit the [IABNewAdPortfolio](#).

Audience & targeting

In terms of placement on the site, the advertiser may ask for a Run of Site (ROS) option which is where ad placements may appear on any pages of the target site. Or they may ask to appear in a specific section, or to take over the whole site, which means they want their ad to run in all the placements available.

If they are looking to connect with a specific profile, an advertiser may ask about audience targeting. For example, a bank might want to reach over 55-year olds with a pension product, or a beauty brand may want their ad to be seen by women aged 18-40. Not all sites can target, nor to the same degree, but these discussions may come up in planning.

Finally, the advertiser or agency may ask about optimisation options for their ads. This is any process that the media owner can action to refine the advertising campaign while it is running so that it will perform more effectively i.e. extending reach, increasing response rate or creating more awareness. For example, they may ask to move their ad to the top of a page so that it is more in-view.

Buying & payment

Advertisers and their agencies typically buy advertising at a cost-per-thousand (CPM). This means they pay revenue to the publisher for every thousand times the ad is shown rather than a flat fee per single impression. An impression is a metric which measures each time an ad is served and displayed, irrespective of whether it is seen or not, or whether it is clicked on or not.

Payment terms are typically set by the advertiser's or agency's contracts, and terms can be anything from 30 days to 90 days after the campaign report has been shared by the media owner or the campaign has ended.

Tracking & reporting

For an advertiser, a major advantage of running campaigns online is the ability to easily track and measure how their adverts are performing. Tracking helps brands to understand more about their customers and how they behave, as well as see if the advertising has achieved reach or engagement goals.

An advertiser or agency will require an analytics report on campaign delivery and effectiveness after the campaign has finished, and sometimes mid-campaign or even weekly, to see how their ads are performing. Standard metrics required in reports include:

Delivery metrics

- Impressions: The total number of times the ad was served. If the same user was served the ad several times, this would count as multiple impressions
- Reach: The number of people who saw the ad in total
- Visits/site traffic: The number of unique visitors who arrive at the advertiser's website

Effectiveness metrics

- Engagement: The attention that was paid to the advert or an interaction with it
- Clicks: A specific action on the ad. A click-through rate (CTR) shows the % of people who saw an ad and clicked on it
- Conversions: A completed action on the advertiser's site. This could be a purchase, or a desired outcome such as an email sign-up or requesting a call-back. The conversion rate (CVR) tells the advertiser how many people their ad converted. Note: the conversion rate will be calculated by marrying the media owner's data with the advertiser's tracking
- Cost-per-acquisition (CPA): Refers to the overall costs associated with driving an action e.g. the sale of a train ticket or the opening of a mortgage application. This can be calculated by dividing total marketing costs by total number of actions taken. Note: CPA will be calculated by marrying the media owner's and advertiser's data
- Audience insights: Where available these are very valuable and would only be shared at the end of a campaign e.g. the majority of the audience were young
- Viewability: Advertisers may also track what percentage of their ads were actually in-view
- Brand uplift: Using Brand Studies to measure how advertising impacted consumer attitudes and brand perceptions

Advertisers will be measuring success in different ways depending on their objective, which will be confirmed when planning the campaign so it is clear for all involved. For example, they may be focused on reach – increasing the number of people who saw their advertising and getting it seen by the right audience. Or they may be more focused on getting people to change behaviour or act on the ad. Alternatively they may seek to change how people think or feel about the brand or, finally, they may just be looking for direct sales, in which case they want to see how the advertising drove purchase.

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This is a living document and may be updated over time.

For more information from IAB UK, the trade body for digital advertising visit www.iabuk.com. Check out the Jargon Buster to help explain industry terms and acronyms www.iabuk.com/jargon-buster

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