EUROPEAN VIEWABILITY MEASUREMENT PRINCIPLES

Version 1.0 (August 2017)

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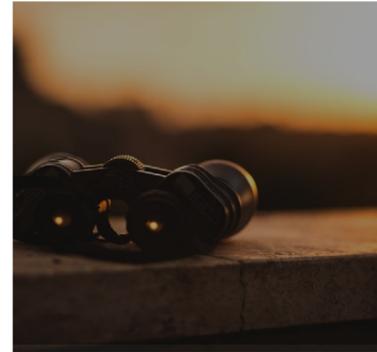
INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the Principles that apply to viewability measurement tools (referred to as 'tool' or 'tools') as approved by the European Viewability Steering Group (EVSG). The Steering Group acknowledges the contribution to the development of these Principles from a range of markets with similar initiatives already in place including BVDW in Germany, Digital Ad Trust in France, JICWEBS in the UK and the MRC in the US.

Extensive consultation with national trade organisations (IABs, agency associations and advertiser associations), media owners, agencies, advertisers, measurement companies and other industry bodies has been undertaken in the development of these Principles.

OUR MISSION

To ensure that harmonised best practice standards and guidelines are applied to the measurement and trading of viewable digital advertising across all markets in Europe (and beyond).

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

There have been industry wide calls to improve the quality of digital ad inventory and develop more robust digital measurement techniques. This is considered a vital step towards delivering 'realistic' brand exposure metrics.

More accurate and consistent viewability measurement will help to establish a more reliable digital 'opportunity-to-see', supporting the need for enhanced comparability with TV and progress towards digital 'gross rating points'.

These Principles will help our industry to achieve the following macro goals:

1. **To raise minimum quality standards** in digital advertising measurement for all stakeholders across Europe.

2. **To measure digital ad exposure** which is deemed a key step to increasing confidence in digital ad trading.

3. **To enhance the (internet) user experience** in the context of changing user expectations.

4. **To improve confidence** in the digital ad environment.

Ultimately, improving audience understanding will enable a better user experience. Keeping people at the forefront of our thinking will, inevitably, lead to a more sustainable, robust and effective digital advertising ecosystem.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The Principles form part of the European Viewability Certification Framework which has the primary goal of helping to significantly reduce measurement discrepancies across the different viewability tools.

DEFINITION OF A VIEWABLE IMPRESSION

A served ad impression can be classified as a viewable impression if the ad was contained in the viewable space of the browser window, on an in-focus browser tab, based on pre-established criteria such as the percent of ad pixels within the viewable space and the length of time the ad is in the viewable space of the browser. It is recognised that an 'opportunity to see' the ad exists with a viewable ad impression, which may or may not be the case with a served ad impression.

SCOPE

The European Viewability Measurement Principles apply to measurement tools reporting the opportunity to see in-page display and in-stream video ad content in an online desktop browser-based environment (this includes PCs and Laptops) and not mobile advertising. Mobile advertising will be covered in the next iteration of these Principles towards the end of 2017.

These Principles currently apply to the measurement of viewability only.

The EVSG could however, also be a useful platform to discuss, develop or contribute towards solutions for other digital advertising priorities within the European market. Such considerations would need to be in line with the shared goals and demands of all markets across Europe, again mindful of their varied characteristics and priorities.

COMPLIANCE

Compliance with these Principles will help to reduce measurement discrepancies across viewable impression measurement tools. Under the European Viewability Certification Framework, the Measurement Principles will be used as the basis for evaluating the performance of the technical approach undertaken by the viewability measurement companies.

Approved auditors will evaluate the measurement companies according to the principles and an evaluation report will be produced to help inform the potential issuing of a European Seal of Accreditation (referred to as a 'Seal'). The Seal will be recognised by all participating European markets and will remove the need for further market-by-market accreditation.

EXISTING INDUSTRY PRACTICES

In addition to the modules outlined on the following pages, the following Principles form a set of core requirements which need to be respected by all measurement companies wishing to obtain the seal:

1.   In all cases a viewable impression must also meet pre-existing criteria for a served impression, for example, counted on the client side, filtered for invalid traffic as per the standard outlined in module 6.1 of these Principles. These are over and above the viewable criteria.

2.   Each valid viewable impression originates from a valid rendered served impression. In no case, should viewable impressions exceed rendered served impressions counted on a campaign. There can never be a viewable impression that does not tie to a rendered served impression and there is a maximum of a one-to-one correspondence between rendered served and viewable impressions.

3.   Once an ad qualifies as a valid viewable impression, it should only be counted as one viewable impression within that user session (see IAB Audience Reach Guidelines for details on "Sessions"), regardless of subsequent exposures. It should not be counted again as an additional viewable impression, even if the user scrolls completely away from the ad and then scrolls back again. This additional exposure may contribute to the total time the ad is in view, but only the original viewable impression should be counted.

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EUROPEAN VIEWABILITY MEASUREMENT PRINCIPLES

MEASUREMENT PRINCIPLES: MODULES

The Principles are composed of a set of 6 modules shown in the following diagram and outlined in more detail on the following pages.

As noted in the scope, these Principles currently apply to the measurement of viewable impressions for in-page display and in-stream video ad content within a desktop (i.e. laptop or PC, not mobile) browser-based environment.

MODULE 1: ENVIRONMENTS

Module 1.1 Operating systems & browsers
The tool should be able to support all market relevant browsers to cover at least 95% of all traffic in Europe. The measurement should not be affected through a specific selection of browser, operating systems, websites, sales houses, speed, countries, daytimes, target groups or similar.

Module 1.2 Media environments
As noted at the beginning of this document, these Principles are designed for measuring desktop browser-based advertising and not mobile advertising. Mobile advertising will be covered in the next iteration of these Principles.

Module 1.2.1 In-page display ad formats
The tool should be able to measure all relevant in-page display ads as enclosed within Appendix A. Appendix A will be updated regularly. Out-stream ads should be considered at in-page ads and measured accordingly.

When measuring expandable ads, only the non-expanded format is relevant. For multi-ads (ads consisting of either connected or unconnected parts) each ad unit should be measured and reported separately for viewability (see module 2.1.1).

Module 1.2.2 In-stream video ad formats
The tool should be able to measure all relevant in-stream video ads, e.g. pre-roll, mid-roll and post-roll. Out-stream and 'companion' ads should be considered at in-page ads and measured accordingly.

For in-stream multi-ads (ads consisting of either connected or unconnected parts) each ad unit should be measured and reported separately for viewability (see module 2.1.1).

MODULE 2: MEASURED ITEMS

This module outlines what item should be measured and specific requirements regarding the implementation of measurement.

Module 2.1 Measured item

The viewability of an ad must be based on the ad itself (for instance, by attaching a Java script tag to the ad). Ad container measurement should not be the only basis of measurement but can be added in addition to support quality assurance. If container measurement is added then the deviation of ad and container should not exceed 10%.

Module 2.1.1 Multi-ad units

Under these guidelines, in a case where the viewability of multiple ad units is required under the terms of a buy, each ad should be measured independently for viewability, and reported independently for viewability, regardless of whether the terms of the campaign specify that more than one (or all) of the multiple units must be viewable; the campaign terms should not influence the reporting of each unit as required by these Principles. Terms and Conditions may dictate the basis on which the units might be monetised (for example, payment is made by the advertiser only if all ad units in a multi-unit buy meet the requirements for a viewable impression), but each unit should still be measured and reported independently.

Module 2.2 Metrics

Module 2.2.1 Metric 1 - Percentage of asset area

The tool must be able to measure the percentage of the asset area in view of any given ad and to report based on a specific threshold.

In order to support technical benchmarking, a 50% threshold has to be supported by the tool; this threshold may change in the future. This is a benchmark for technical measurement purposes only. In addition, the tool must be able to support at least one custom variation to this threshold to be used and reported in parallel.

Module 2.2.2 Metric 2 - Time displayed

The tool must be able to measure the amount of time in view of any given ad and to report based on a specific threshold. The time metric should be measured after the area metric outlined in module 2.2.1.

In order to support technical benchmarking, a one second threshold has to be supported by the tool; this threshold may change in the future. This is a benchmark for technical measurement purposes only. In addition, the tool must be able to at least one custom variation to this threshold to be used and reported in parallel.

Module 2.2.3 Strong user interaction

If the measurer is able to determine that there is a strong user interaction with the ad, then the ad may be counted as viewable even if it does not meet the pixel and time criteria noted above. In this context, a legitimate click (i.e. it satisfies the requirements for counting a click, based on the IAB's Click Measurement Guidelines) would constitute a "strong user interaction" that would result in a viewable impression; but a mouse-over alone generally would not be considered a user interaction with the ad that would serve as a proxy for viewability (Note: A click that initiates a Click to Play video ad would not, in itself, be considered a user interaction that satisfies this criteria).

Specific user interactions that will satisfy the requirement of a "strong user interaction" should be appropriate to the advertisement and the environment in which it appears, they should be empirically defensible as reasonable proxies for viewability, and each type of qualifying user interaction should be fully disclosed by the measurement organization. In addition, the number of viewable impressions that result from application of a user interaction rule must be segregated from normal views for reporting purposes.

MODULE 3: MEASUREMENT

The reference for the measurement is the viewport of a browser. It has to be ensured, that the viewport is in an active tab or window of the browser.

The following are the scenarios that have to be supported by the tool as a minimum:

- Ad served within multiple (up to 3) cross-domain iFrames
- Browser is moved off screen
- Page is scrolled
- Browser is resized
- Opening another browser hides existing browser
- Opening another tab hides existing tab

Module 3.1 Scope of measurement – full sample
All tools are required to measure the total campaign. Modelling of parts of the campaign is not permitted.

Module 3.2 Point of measurement – post render
The measurement of the required metrics must start after the ad has been rendered to the browser, i.e. after the initial load but prior to the sub-load. For video ads this requires the first frame to be rendered but not the full video. Ads delivered to pages that are pre-fetched or pre-rendered should not be counted as viewable impressions until such time as they appear in the viewable area of the browser window and meet the necessary criteria for a viewable impression

Module 3.3 Minimum polling requirements
To promote consistency across tools, the following minimum frequencies for measurement polling or snapshots of observations for determining viewability of an ad are required: for viewable display impression processes, 100 milliseconds.

Module 3.3.1 Browser state changes
In addition, tools with the capability to monitor browser state changes may utilise this approach in lieu of the above polling requirements, until such time

as a state change is recognised (at which time they should poll at the above stated frequency at minimum), if these monitored state changes account for changes in scroll position, browser size/dimensions, and tab focus. Measurement companies who use this approach in their measurement tools should clearly disclose this and segregate the number of viewable impressions identified by this approach for reporting purposes.

Module 3.4 Cross domain I-Frames
The use of I-Frames to facilitate the ad-serving process and maintain page integrity is a commonly accepted practice. In some cases, third or fourth party serving or ad networks and exchanges can employ nested I-Frames (I-Frames within I-Frames) which can create challenges for Viewable Ad Impression counting processes because of browser operational/security restrictions that limit the information available to the measurer about ad content served into I-Frames from outside domains.

Measurers of Viewable Ad Impressions should have procedures to classify and report the extent to which they are able to measure the viewable status of advertising, including those ads served into I-Frames from other domains. The viewable status of these ads served into cross domain I-Frames can be very complex to determine, given that multiple nested I-Frames can occur in network or exchange environments and the fact that some browser-based tools can have limited visibility into certain I-Frame transactions served from outside sources.

The extent to which the ad content served into I-Frames can be assessed by these tools should be disclosed; this is sometimes referred to as a "see-through rate." Assessments applicable to I-Frame viewable decisioning include whether the appropriate ad content was actually served within the I-Frame, whether the ad was appropriately sized to the I-Frame size, and whether the ad was actually visible (e.g., a single pixel I-Frame would lead to an invisible ad).

A minimum measured rate of 90% is required by the tool. The ability to assess the viewable status of an ad within a nested I-Frame environment directly influences the measurement rate. Therefore, the tool needs to be capable of measuring in nested I-Frame environments, if otherwise the measuring rate would drop below 90%.

MODULE 4: TRANSPARENCY & REPORTING

The following metrics must be reported on a per ad (placement) level with the ability to aggregate to a publisher (site), sales house and campaign level.

Module 4.1 Counts

Module 4.1.1 Gross impressions
The total number of served impressions.

Module 4.1.2 Total rendered served impressions
The total number of served impressions that render on the page (also see existing industry practices section)

Module 4.1.3 Viewable impressions
If "Strong User Interaction" (see module 2.2.3) is being used as a proxy for the viewable status, the number of impressions per user action type must be reported in this section The total number of impressions that meet the 'viewable' criteria as agreed by the trading partners.

Module 4.1.4 Non-viewable impressions
The total number of impression that do not meet the 'viewable' criteria as agreed by the trading partners.

Module 4.1.5 Impressions with viewable status undetermined
The total number of impressions that have no reported viewable status.

Module 4.2 Performance metrics
There are two performance metrics which should be reported together to the end user of the data.

For the explanations below, consider the following example: a campaign has a total of 1000 rendered served impressions, 300 were determined to be viewable, 200 were determined to be non-viewable, and 500 were undetermined as to viewable state.

Module 4.2.1 Viewable rate
This is calculated as a percentage and represents Viewable Impressions / (Viewable Impressions + Non-Viewable Impressions). For example: 300/ (300+200) = 60%

Module 4.2.2 Impression distribution
This is the percentage that each reporting bucket represents of total rendered served impressions. Using the example: Impression Distribution amounts to 30% Viewable, 20% Non-Viewable and 50% Undetermined.

MODULE 5: USER EXPERIENCE

In the light of the ongoing ad blocking discussion any measurement system tracking viewability should adhere to the following Principles.

Module 5.1 Lightweight
The system should use any available means to minimise the necessary code size for viewability measurement up to a maximum of 40kb per ad. It also has to be multi-tenancy enabled in order to support multiple clients on the same page using one script only.

Module 5.2 Encrypted
Any data exchanged has to be encrypted. Viewable impression measurement tools should have specific controls in place to prevent unauthorised parties from manipulating or hijacking the viewable measurement code, and to protect the unaltered communication transmission of the viewable impression information between the client browser and the counting servers.

Module 5.3 Privacy
As a general principle, all measurement companies with viewability measurement tools should comply with the current EU privacy legislation.

MODULE 6: NON-HUMAN TRAFFIC

Module 6.1 Non-human traffic
As general principles measurement companies should be subscribed to the standard IAB/ABC Spiders and Bots list as well as being accredited for implementing standard algorithms based on the current MRC specification for General IVT detection.

END OF MEASUREMENT PRINCIPLES
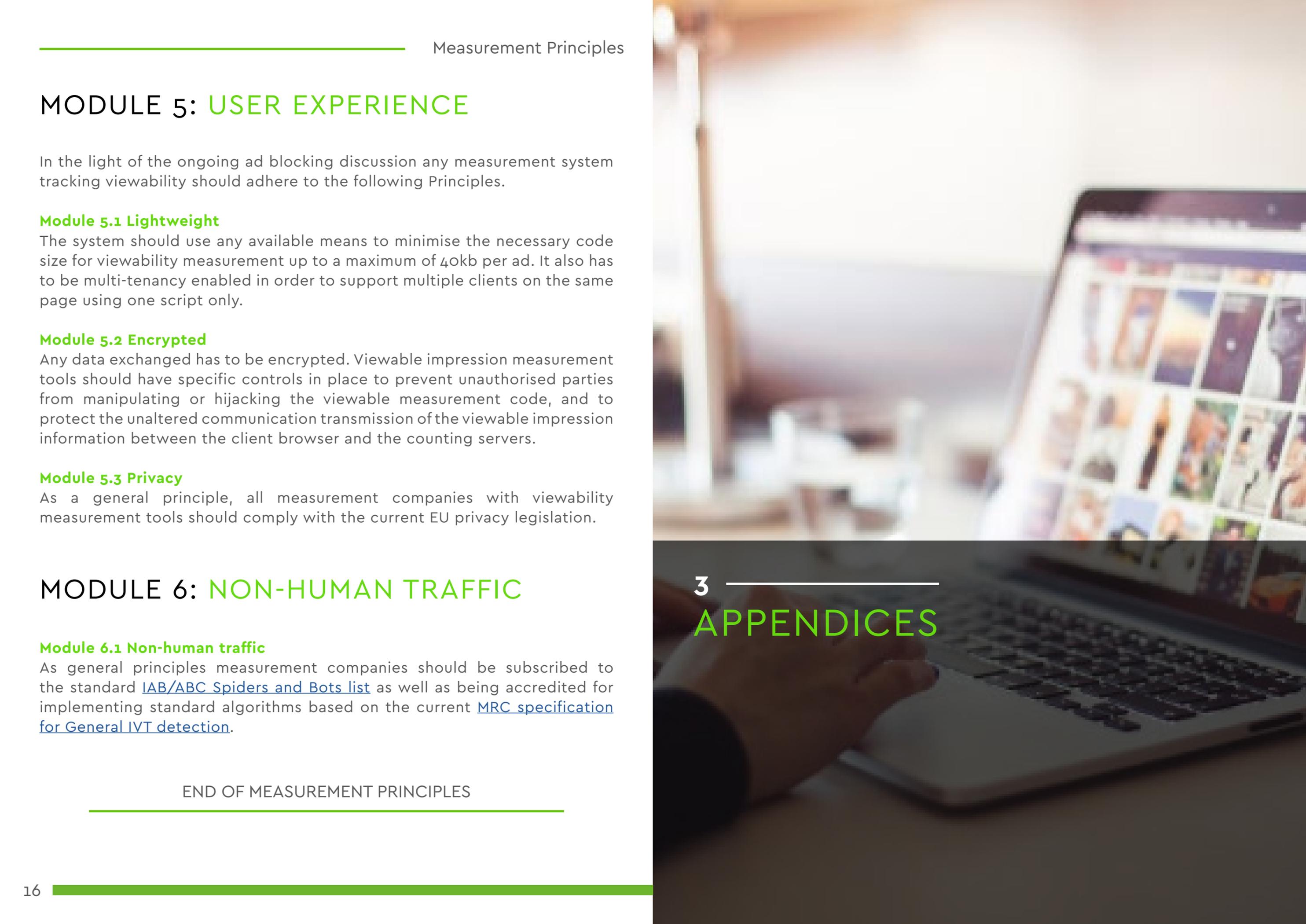
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IN-PAGE DISPLAY ADS

The tool must be able to measure the following ad formats for viewability according to the Principles set out in this document as a minimum. If measurement tools are able to measure the following ad formats with minimal or no discrepancies, then the it is assumed they would be able to do this for other ad formats too.

Ad Unit Dimension	Brand Builders (IAB Europe)	Universal Ad Package (IAB US)	Rising Stars (IAB US)	Premium Ad Package (BVDW)
Static				
160x600	Expandable Skyscraper	Expandable Skyscraper		
300x250	Medium Rectangle	Medium Rectangle		
300x600	Half Page		Filmstrip	Halfpage Ad
300x1050			Portrait	
640x480				Maxi Ad
728x90		Leaderboard		
728x410	Landscape (16:9 compatible)			
770x250				Banderole Ad
970x250			Billboard	

Ad Unit Dimension	Brand Builders (IAB Europe)	Universal Ad Package (IAB US)	Rising Stars (IAB US)	Premium Ad Package (BVDW)
Expandable				
160x600 → 300x600	Expandable Skyscraper			
300x250 → 728x410	Expandable Rectangle			
728x90 → 728x300				Pushdown Ad
728x90 → 728x410	Expandable Leaderboard			
970x90 → 970x415			Pushdown	
970x90 → 970x550			Slider	
300x250 / 300x600 / 970x250 → 850x500 / 970x550			Sidekick	

APPENDIX B: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES

Measurement companies are asked to consider the following developments of their technology in preparation for future versions of the European Viewability Measurement Principles:

- Measurement of flex ad formats as recommended in the new IAB Tech Lab Standard Ad Portfolio
- Measurement of multi-ad units to be reported as a single ad with distributed pixel areas
- Measurement of mobile advertising environments

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