

There is growing demand for server side ad insertion.

The delivery of content intended to be consumed offline, like podcasts, is a core driver of the need for server side ad insertion. There are also a growing number of video cases to be considered, where server side ad insertion provides better support for ads delivered in a stream to device players.

Server side ad insertion also has potential as a defense for content owners against post-delivery content modification, whether through client-installed ad blocking or ad inserting toolbars, or by more malicious parties.

Finally, doing ad insertion on the server allows the ad to be scanned for malicious code, and offers a means to protect consumers against technologically malicious advertising (malvertising).

Measurement and other advertising scenarios are predicated on the third party ad server having access to the client.

Third party ad serving delivers value partly because the third party provides wide ranging insight into a consistently identified device. This provides a value lift especially for smaller publishers, where an ad impression can be more valuable when the device has previously been seen on a more sought after property.

The third party also acts as the trusted party when it comes to measurement, both because they're often a third party to both the advertiser and the publisher (trusted broker), and also because there are fewer third party advertisers than there are publishers, therefore allowing buyers to trust a smaller set of participants.

Third parties also allow the consolidation of user preferences.

Client-side ad insertion also defends against fraud by allowing a third party to insert code to detect indicators of fraud. Fraud is more easily perpetrated against buyers who do not have such access.

Video ads delivered through server side ad insertion often do not have access to rich interfaces (like VPAID). However, this is sometimes by design, when the video stream is being delivered to a non-VPAID compliant player.

The development of server side ad insertion has a variety of benefits and costs, as elucidated above.

Briefly

- Increased responsibility for the publishers in measurement and advertising content.
- Decreased available information for ad targeting, reducing the value of ad impressions on smaller publishers.
- Increased number of opt-out and other user-preference systems required.
- Change in the established trust web, with significantly larger number of parties potentially requiring trust.

The scenarios that server side ad insertion enables are important business scenarios
Briefly

- Proxied ad delivery.
- Offline/cached ad delivery counting.
- The counting of multiple ad impressions in a single transaction.

The industry must develop a clear path to enabling the optional support of server side ad insertion.

While a full migration is not feasible, updating measurement guidelines so that they do not explicitly exclude server side measurement is a necessary first step in enabling server side ad insertion.

Specific guidance on the technical details of server side ad insertion is needed, covering a variety of spaces:

- Guidelines for measurement.
- Specifications for server-to-server transfer of advertising assets.
- Guidelines for the synchronization of advertising identity.

The development of guidelines for delivery and measurement of ads inserted on the server, rather than in the client, will benefit the industry and consumers.

Having clear guidance on server side ad insertion will reduce the business friction seen today by a range of innovative companies.

Enabling offline and cached ad delivery will allow a larger number of products and services to be supported by advertising, increasing consumer choice.

Having an additional tool to help defend against ad blocking and ad insertion will help existing publishers and service providers maintain the content and services they currently offer to consumers.