IAB EUROPE'S
GUIDE TO IDENTITY:
TECHNICAL STANDARDS
& KEY CONSIDERATIONS

iab.europe

Contents

Section 1. Introduction

With third-party cookies and Android Advertising IDs (AAIDs) set to be phased out by Google, and Apple's ID for Advertisers (IDFA) privacy updates already taking effect, web and mobile app publishers and advertisers are testing new approaches to addressability.

Alternative identifiers figure prominently as one such alternative for publishers and advertisers. However, more than 80 independent IDs are currently available, each requiring its own on-site tag, implementation, technical troubleshooting, and reporting capabilities, which makes things complicated.

This short Guide has been developed by experts from IAB Europe's Programmatic Trading Committee (PTC) to help publishers and buyers get to grips with some of the technical standards that need to be considered in the ID market. It provides an educational resource on identity standards and some key considerations when looking to buy and apply ID solutions.

Section 2. Definitions

Advertising Identifiers enable brands to recognise customers across the authenticated and anonymous web and across devices.

Identifiers are enabled by technologies that support audience qualification and targeting, audience addressability, frequency capping, and measurement and attribution tools. They come in a variety of formats, and are a prerequisite to address a user for frequency capping or personalised and optimised advertising. They can be either device or user-level, depending on the type of identifier.

It is important to note that user addressability in digital advertising does not aim to identify an individual person with name, address or phone number but rather generate a pseudonym to engage and optimise against when buying media or delivering ads. Identifiers must also be privacy centric to ensure compliance with GDPR and other privacy regulations.

For more information on what Identifiers are, check out our one sheet here.

Section 3. Technical Standards

To help navigate the complex world of identity, we've outlined some of the technical terms and standards that should be considered when looking to apply identity solutions in the programmatic ecosystem below:

OpenRTB

- Device ID : To allow the publisher, and more precisely the SSP, to transmit a Device ID to the DSP, historically the *device.ifa* field in OpenRTB was created. However this was mainly for Android and Apple due to the large use of mobile. But over the years, the industry has seen the rise of other devices (i.e. CTV) and the OpenRTB spec has, as such, been updated to welcome this expansion with an additional object named *device.ext.ifa_type*. This allows other manufacturers such as Roku, Amazon etc.to be handled by OpenRTB (for more information about ifa_type, see IAB Tech Lab's Guidelines for Identifier for Advertising (IFA) on CTV/OTT platforms).

- ID solution : There are many ID solutions and a publisher can use either one or many. To allow the publisher, and more precisely the SSP, to transmit those IDs such as ID5, sharedId etc. to the DSP, the object named *user.ext.eids* (extended identifiers) is dedicated in the OpenRTB spec (for more information about ifa_type, see IAB Tech Lab's Guidelines for Identifier for Advertising (IFA) on CTV/OTT platforms).

Prebid

- Device ID : According to each bidder in header bidding, Prebid allows the publisher to share the device ID to other bidders and the ad server.

- ID solution : According to each bidder in header bidding, Prebid allows the publisher to share an ID solution to other bidders and the ad server.

Additional info :

- The mechanisms are designed to be aligned with the different geo restrictions, such as the GDPR.

- As the ecosystem is developing more and more solutions, the standard tries to adapt quickly, especially for the test period (e.g. Privacy sandbox).

3.1 Technical Terms Around the User

The end of third-party cookies demands new solutions and methodologies to identify a user and provide the right message by taking into consideration privacy and different channels (e.g., desktop, mobile, CTV, etc.).

Here are some of the technical terms for alternative identity solutions that enable publishers and advertisers to discover audiences on the anonymous web:

First-party cookie: User data that is only accessible by the website's owner.

Single Sign On (SSO): A mechanism implemented by the publisher in order to allow a user to get access to a publisher's content with a user account. Some companies use a generated user ID or email (most of the time hashed) to follow the user's journey and address the right message.

Audience modelling:

- **Probabilistic** : A model based on anonymous data points such as device type, time zone etc.
- **Deterministic:** A model based on data that is tied to the user's personal identifiers such as names or email.

Device ID: Especially for mobile environments, CTV and other devices, the Device ID can be used as an identifier for advertising (e.g. Android's AAID, Apple's IDFA, Amazon's AFAI, etc.)

Cohort: A mechanism to create an ID that is shared by a large number of people based on common criteria (e. g. browser history)

Section 4. Key Considerations

4.1 Key Considerations When Buying an ID Solution

Like any technical solution, ID solutions should be simple to buy, cost-effective, and easy to implement to encourage large-scale adoption and use across the supply chain. Ideally, identifiers will operate in real-time to enable true programmatic delivery. In addition, it is best to check whether the identity solution delivers:

- Compliance with privacy regulations such as the GDPR
- A comprehensive and omnichannel people-based identity
- Compliance and safety
- Neutrality and interoperability
- Global reach
- Performance metrics

4.2 Key Considerations When Applying an ID Solution

The easiest way for buyers to apply identity solutions is to work with a preferred digital or programmatic vendor that is equipped with the right solutions to help them reach their target audiences or measure campaign success at scale.

For **advertisers**, identity solutions are often applied during campaign flight with the help of data management partners or identity vendors, e.g., via predefined or custom-defined programmatic deals. Therefore, layering different audience solutions is possible at the campaign setup level.

On the **publisher** side, some identity solutions require a varying degree of implementation or coding effort. When coding is evolved (e.g., on an SDK level), this effort is also paired with continuous maintenance, and staying on top of feature updates or regulatory changes. Given that the activation of identifiers usually only requires publishers to add light code to minimise increased download times to the web page or application SDK, the buy and apply process should be very fast.

If no coding is needed (e.g. for contextual solutions), publishers often need to make sure they pass all relevant signals to maximise the targeting efficacy. Publishers also have the power and ability to leverage their first-party data by bundling it into cohorts and segments, making them available to advertisers on programmatic pipes via inventory based deals.

4.3 Getting Started – Buy and Apply

Brands looking to get new identity solutions up and running, should consider the following initial steps:

1. Audit your existing campaign buying strategy and develop a plan to begin testing alternative solutions to third-party cookie campaigns

2. Set benchmarks by running your cookie- and device-based ID campaigns in tandem with people-based campaigns

3. Implement an authentication strategy that supports data-based marketing capabilities

4. Ensure the identity solution you are using adheres to relevant privacy laws including the GDPR

Meanwhile, publishers can start their identity journey by:

1. Evaluating all potential ID providers

2. Determining the optimal mix of providers to deliver the scale required to reach a majority of users

3. Engaging with ID providers to activate IDs and ensure interoperability

4. Determining and formalising respective data obligations with all parties

.

Section 5. Questions to Ask Identity Providers

What should advertisers and publishers look for when investing in an identity solution? IAB Europe's Programmatic Trading Committee has identified a range of key questions to ask.

Questions for Advertisers to Ask Identity Providers:

• What do you solve for? Targeting or measurement, or both?
• Does your solution run on anonymous or authenticated data?
• Is your solution compliant with GDPR / relevant local privacy law? How is consent gathered?
• Can the ID recognise users cross-device and cross-channel to enable a 360-degree profile of the user and accurate analytics?
• Can the ID operate in real time to reach people at the right moment?
• Is your solution scalable in terms of addressable reach?
• Can the solution be extended to all channels?
• What is the reach per channel?
• Can you onboard your first-party data for custom or lookalike targeting opportunities?
• Does the solution support measurement of custom KPIs?
• Is the technology implementation transparent?
• Has the solution been vetted for data sourcing, quality, and efficacy ?
• Is the solution interoperable or can it be combined with other solutions?

Questions for publishers to ask identity providers:

• Does the solution cover all regulations and privacy compliance requirements?
• Does your solution run on anonymous or authenticated user data?
• Do consumers feel comfortable giving their consent for their information to be used for the ID?
• Do you also offer a proprietary Consent Management Platform (CMP)? Or would we as the publisher build or implement an external CMP solution on our end?
• Are signals passed on to third parties? If so, how is consent gathered?
• Does the solution allow publishers to create and sell their own audiences?
• What are the steps to follow to implement the solution? Do we need to add code to the website/ SDK for the solution to work?
• Do you have the capacity to handle the contract process and code maintenance?
• What is the impact of implementing the solution on the user flow?

- Do app developers need to pass on contextual signals through the bid stream?
- Can the solution be adapted to our proprietary needs?
- How much integration support do you offer (documentation pages, personal point of contact)?
- What is the demand side adoption for the solution? Is the solution scalable across demand partners?
- Have you invested in building the technology, infrastructure, and analytics reporting necessary to succeed in cookieless addressability?
- Do you work with organisations like Prebid, IAB Tech Lab and W3C (vendors that do will likely have more skill when it comes to developing scalable solutions)?
- Is the solution interoperable?
- Besides addressability, does the solution offer other benefits such as insights on user behaviour for personalisation?
- Do you have a broad set of ID partners that can simply and efficiently integrate new solutions with speed, efficiency, and ease?

Summary

With the withdrawal of third-party cookies and the constraining of Mobile Advertising IDs, the advertising technology ecosystem is responding with a broad range of alternatives that will underpin the programmatic industry of the future. Given the variety of options available, it is likely that publishers and brands will use several identifiers and identity solutions as well as other solutions in the market in a post third-party cookie world.

This Guide helps support buyers in their journey to buying and applying Identity solutions.

The job at hand overall is for industry players to build on the excellent work that has taken place to date and to collaborate in building solutions that are sustainable and aligned to the expectations of regulators and consumers. It is a task that IAB Europe is proud to support, and we look forward to continuing the work with our members on bringing the new age of digital advertising into existence.

For all the information you need to know today to prepare for the impending post-third-party cookie era, don't forget to check out IAB Europe's comprehensive Guide to the Post Third-Party Cookie Era here that was last updated in March 2022.

Contributors

IAB Europe would like to thank the following contributors who helped to author this Guide:

Jurjen de Wal, Senior Product Director, Global Partnerships & Integrations, Adform

Alexandre Nderagakura, Technical Director, IAB Europe

Valbona Gjini, Senior Director of Marketing and Communications, ID5

Jamie Penkethman, Product Marketing Director, Index Exchange

Ryan Afshar, Head of Addressability, LiveRamp

Tanya Field, Co-Founder and CPO, Novatiq

Contributors

Kofi Amoako, Regional Vice President, Addressability, EMEA, PubMatic

Maria Shcheglakova, Marketing Director, EMEA PubMatic

Janina Abou Al Ward, Senior Product Marketing Manager, Verve Group

Josephine Howe, Senior Marketing Manager, Xandr

Lauren Wakefield
Marketing & Industry Programmes Director
wakefield@iabeurope.eu

Marie-Clare Puffett
Senior Manager, Marketing & Industry Programmes
puffett@iabeurope.eu

@iabeurope

/iab-europe

iabeurope.eu

iab.europe