

# Addressing D&I in Brand Safety

# Background

To address diversity, inclusion and equity in the advertising industry, it is not enough to change how we recruit and promote diverse talent: we also need to address diversity in each aspect of media buying, including the brand safety practices.

Let us be clear, there is a sound business case to be made in favour of reaching all communities – campaigns that use keywords may have inflated their CPM by up to 70%<sup>1</sup>. However, certain brand safety practices have often inadvertently excluded publications targeting different groups.

The Media Quality Task Force publishes this short Guide to encourage European agencies to raise awareness of this problem and to change their practices.

## Key aspects

As we begin to address this problem, we can start with the three key elements, while bearing in mind that others will follow:

- How we exclude unsuitable and unsafe content
- How we target and include diverse publications
- How we communicate

# How we exclude unsuitable and unsafe content

- Not every type of content is suitable for every type of brand. As a matter of best practice, brands should determine their risk tolerance and corresponding suitability criteria. In the past, brands, who wanted to avoid stories about hate crime against minority groups would use exact match keyword blocking using terms such as 'gay' or 'Arab'.
- All brands should revise their keyword 'blocklists' used across programmatic, social and search and exclude the words that factually represent a community and do not have an inherent negative connotation. Words include, but are not limited to: Gay, Lesbian, LGBTQI, Arab, Black, Indian, Muslim, Christian, Bible, Quran, Senior, Hindu, Jew, dementia, Trans, straight, hijab and more.
- Ensure you remove all local translations as well, not only the words in English.
- Ensure you remove all permutations of the relevant words (e.g. Remove the keyword Jews, not only Jew).
- Ad verification has evolved since then and it now allows brands to target positive sentiment pre-bid segments, which significantly reduces the risk while not blocking diverse publications.



# What to do instead?

- Clients do not want to block all content targeting or speaking about different communities. They want to avoid the negative stories about it. Work with your verification provider, and understand what kind of segments they have available to prevent your clients' brands from appearing next to discriminatory or negative content affecting minority groups.
- Where available, consider utilising the GARM Brand Safety and Suitability Framework to help steer consistent definitions and understand your client's suitability criteria.
- Using keywords is not the best practice, instead semantic technology should be used. However, we recognise that not all clients will stop using keywords. In that case, if you are still using keyword blocking, start with the worst of the worst (swearwords and/or slurs) and keywords addressing specific client concerns.
- Equally, avoid exact match, instead block keyword combinations which are likely to result in only blocking negative content (e.g. instead of blocking the word 'Jew', block 'Jew hate crime' to exclude content about hate crime against this community).
- Set a regular review cadence and eliminate topical words that have aged. That cadence will depend upon volume and regularity of the campaigns.





# How we communicate

Terms such as 'whitelist' and 'blacklist' should be put out of use.

## How to do it?

- **Change the narrative:** refer to content and sites you want included in your campaigns as *Inclusion Lists*, and conversely content and sites you want eliminated in your campaigns as *Exclusion Lists*. Do not use the term 'blocklist' as it resembles too closely the 'blacklist' term. The term 'master' should also be put out of use.
- **Embed it in your operations:** update all operating documents between marketers, agencies, platforms, and technology partners to reflect this shift.

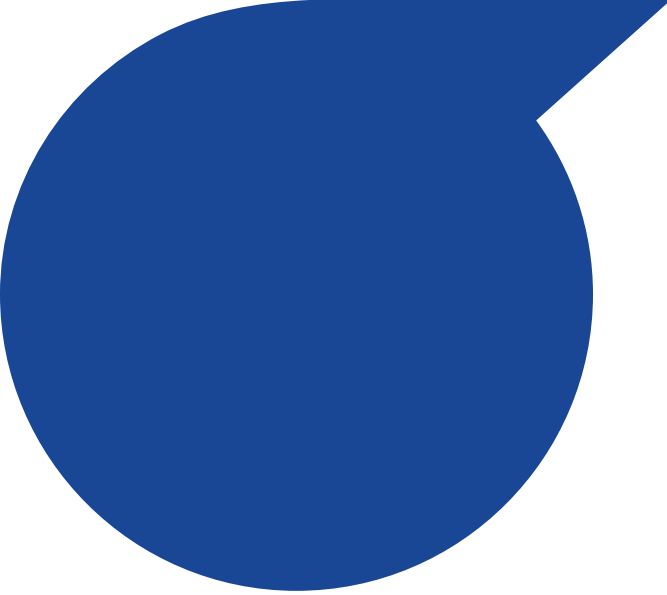




# How we target and include diverse and inclusive content

- Part of the brand safety process in every market and client team is to decide which media properties to use for one or all campaigns. This is primarily done by devising inclusion lists, and using 3rd party solutions where available.
- As a matter of principle, all teams should strive to include publications highlighting or targeting diverse communities (e.g. LGBTQ+, 50+, Gen Z, Black, Asian, Muslim etc.). Relevant teams are invited to rely on available resources in their own market or region. Unfortunately, a single global source of all relevant publications is unavailable. You should ensure that these publications are vetted for risk in accordance with local media vetting principles.
- In cases where a domain or an app is flagged for disinformation, propaganda or other harmful content, before excluding it from supply by default, ensure that the domain/app is reviewed by a diverse group of people to avoid bias.





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